

# A BOOK OF ESSAYS

## MONSIGNOR BENSON

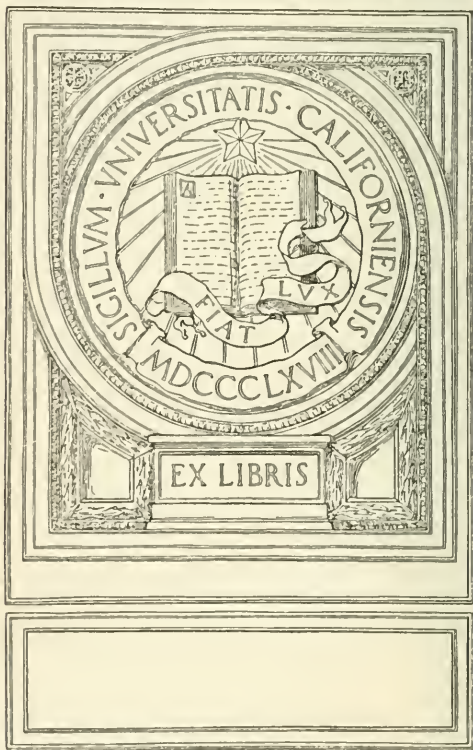
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A BOOK OF ESSAYS





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MONSIGNOR HUGH BENSON.



# A BOOK OF ESSAYS

BY MONSIGNOR  
ROBERT HUGH BENSON

WITH A MEMOIR BY THE REV. ALLAN ROSS  
OF THE LONDON ORATORY AND A FORE-  
WORD BY THE REV. C. C. MARTINDALE, S.J.

LONDON  
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## FOREWORD

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IN almost any piece of continuous history there are moments at which the student has an almost free choice as to how he shall *interpret* the facts, this way or that. For research is worth little until an interpretation of and a verdict upon the evidence are possible. Every now and then, these are exceptionally important and exceptionally difficult to read. Thus : Can the gulf between the thought of Christ and that of His first evangelists and apostles be bridged? Is the Church of 150 A.D. organically continuous with that of the Apostles? Such questions as these are vital to one who would decide what he must "think of Christ." Perhaps in all cases the answer is best given under the strong impulse of God's grace. Still, human words can help.

For Mgr. Benson, the crucial points, at which he believed himself able to help, were not those which we have mentioned, but certain "moments" connected with the position of St. Peter and the Pope, with the crisis of the Reformation, and with the relation of modern religious instinct with the unseen world. *Infallibility and Tradition* was a topic which from the beginning had preoccupied him. Mr. Spencer Jones, under whose auspices his paper was read, had, years before, helped



Hugh Benson not a little towards submission to the Infallible See. *Queens Mary and Elizabeth* stand almost as symbols of the acceptance or rejection of that See : Benson puts before you their *Death-beds*, and leaves you to interpret his picture of those meaningful and yet mysterious moments in our history. In *Christian Science* and *Spiritualism* he examines two modern manifestations of that strange tendency which drives men, despite themselves, to reach out beyond the materialistic world, into the unseen, and he unhesitatingly condemns these two systems as frivolous, dangerous, and degrading. To whom then shall we go ? Back to that *Catholicism* which includes all that Christ taught ; that Queen Mary clung to, finding in it the happiness which Elizabeth had lost ; and all that the modern spiritistic methods offer and do not give. To Catholicism, he argues in yet another pamphlet, belongs *the Future* ; to Catholicism England, in particular, he avers, must, if she is to keep any Christianity, receive *Conversion*.

In this group, then, of reprinted pamphlets is to be found one expression of the scheme into which Mgr. Benson's outlook fitted itself. It is again and again true that, starting with Christianity as the Revelation of God, he could see no form anywhere save the Catholic into which it could intelligibly place itself. Since then Christianity, as he believed, is immortal, to the Catholics belong the future—even as they have possessed the past, and educated Europe into all that is best and truest in the present.

C. C. MARTINDALE,

*Easter, 1916.*



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# MONSIGNOR HUGH BENSON

(1871-1914)

BY ALLAN ROSS

*(Priest of the London Oratory)*

"Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time."  
WISDOM iv. 13.

## INTRODUCTION

IT would be impossible in the limited space available to do justice to the subject of this brief biography. He managed to accomplish so much in so short a time, he was so many-sided in his activities, he was so well known among the men of this generation, there is so much that might be said about him and which must perforce be left unsaid, that it will only be possible to give a brief outline of his life, and then describe some of its outstanding features. The object, therefore, of this brief appreciation of one who passed meteor-like across the horizon of the Church, will be to interest its readers in Hugh Benson, priest of the Catholic Church, in the hope that it will draw them to study his interesting personality more fully in the official biography<sup>1</sup> which will be issued in due course, and above all in the many writings which his versatile genius has bequeathed to posterity.

The reader will find the personality of the writer stamped upon their pages—his sincerity, his dis-



like of cant and conventionalism, his mistrust of the feelings as a reliable guide of human conduct, his marvellous imaginative power and dramatic instinct, his keen powers of observation, his hatred of display, his zeal for souls. And he will find, too, in these books the impress of the man of prayer, who recognizes that union with God is the supreme work of man in this life—whether that union be obtained by the faithful discharge of the duties of one's state of life, with its background of prayer, or whether it be obtained—as in the case of those who have the call—by a life of contemplation. Hugh Benson was a man of prayer, inasmuch as prayer formed the background to his life of strenuous activity, and helped him to go forth with the heart of an apostle, and proclaim the Catholic Church as the authentic interpreter of God's revelation to men and as the divinely appointed means of healing the breach between God and His creatures.

Perhaps it may not be out of place to make here a few remarks on mysticism, because it is very conspicuous in Hugh Benson's writings, and also because it is a subject concerning which there is a good deal of misapprehension.

It is a commonly received opinion that a mystic is a useless dreamer, ever wrapped away from earth, and incapable of taking any practical interest in earthly things. But such is not the Catholic Church's view. She recognizes in mysticism a motive power which impels to real activities, as in the case of such typical mystics as St. Francis de Sales, St. Teresa, and St. Catherine of Siena, whose lives were so very strenuous because of their conscious perception of the Divine presence. She does not teach that



all mystics are saints ; for it may well be that true mystical experience, although supernatural, may be compatible with lives of holiness which do not reach the lofty heights of heroic virtue, in which true sanctity consists ; but she recognizes in mysticism a potent factor in the active life of individuals.

If we use mystical experience to denote "conscious personal touch with God,"<sup>2</sup> then a mystic is one who has passed through the lower degrees of prayer and attained to that degree which is called the prayer of contemplation. There is no need here to give a description of the generally accepted divisions of prayer, as classified by recognized teachers in the Catholic Church, for there are many classical treatises on prayer, among which St. Teresa's *The Interior Castle* is one of the best known, with its seven different mansions. But perhaps it may be permissible to draw attention to the view upheld by teachers of authority that contemplative prayer is within the reach of all. This view, which certainly has much to recommend it, has been clearly set forth in a recent work,<sup>3</sup> where the writer supports his conclusions by the teaching of four of the greatest teachers on prayer in the Church, all four canonized saints, two of them being at the same time great theologians and doctors of the Church—St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Francis de Sales. According to this view, "those who pray in earnest and are desirous of giving themselves up to God entirely by all-round detachment usually go on to the contemplative way."<sup>4</sup>

If it be asked why so comparatively few attain to contemplation, the answer may be given in the



words of St. John of the Cross : "because only a few are ready to enter into the void and into complete detachment of spirit." <sup>5</sup> To obtain from God the graces necessary for contemplation, one must be faithful to the different practices of the spiritual life, meditation, mortification, and self-renunciation, but if this preparation "be faithfully made, God, unless some quite exceptional purpose intervene, will never fail at the proper time to grant special graces enabling one to contemplate." <sup>6</sup>

There are different degrees of contemplative prayer, and if comparatively few attain even to the lowest degree, far fewer are they who are sufficiently heroic to reach the higher. But contemplation is essentially "no other thing than a loving, simple, and permanent attention of the spirit to divine things," <sup>7</sup> comprising a certain consciousness of God's presence. "Oh ! how happy is the soul who, in the tranquillity of her heart, lovingly preserves the sacred feeling of God's presence. . . . Now when I speak here of the sacred sentiment of God's presence, I do not mean to speak of a sensible feeling, but of that which resides in the summit and supreme point of the spirit, where heavenly love reigns and conducts its principal exercises." <sup>8</sup>

The soul, then, which reaches contemplation attains in prayer to a certain consciousness of God's presence, and according to the teaching here emphasized, "contemplation is the normal goal of the spiritual life," <sup>9</sup> though it can only be attained at the cost of labour and self-renunciation, in other words, by a faithful putting into practice of the exercises of the spiritual life, for "if we had to describe the preparation to be under-



gone by the soul for contemplation, a whole treatise on asceticism would be needed." <sup>10</sup>

But the soul which has passed through the lower degrees of prayer and reached the state of contemplation, is permeated by a supernatural source of energy, which manifests itself in active works for God. If such a soul lives in the world, it feels impelled to labour generously for God's sake, and I take it that such was the case with Hugh Benson. That meditation, in his case, had passed into a prayer of greater simplicity, is, I think, to be gathered from his own writings, and that he was an ardent advocate of prayer seems to be one of the characteristics of his life. It can be gathered from his books, and is formally expressed in the Preface which he wrote to a work on prayer <sup>11</sup>: "There is one supreme mode of sanctification which . . . is accessible practically everywhere to souls that desire it, and that is the Way of Prayer. . . . If one thing is absolutely clear from the dogmatic as well as from the ascetic teaching of the Church, it is that a life of Prayer, tending to perfection, is within the reach of every devout Christian."

### HIS LIFE

Robert Hugh Benson was born at Wellington College on November 16, 1871, his father, who ultimately became Archbishop of Canterbury, being at the time head master there. He was the youngest of six children, two of whom, Arthur and Frederick, subsequently attained, like himself, to literary distinction. Some interesting details of his childhood have been given us by the former in a very sympathetic memoir, *Hugh*, and certainly he seems to have given no promise in those



early days of any exceptional powers. "Speaking generally," his brother writes, "I should call him in those days a quick, inventive, active-minded child, entirely unsentimental; he was fond of trying his hand at various things, but he was impatient and volatile, would never take any trouble, and as a consequence never did anything well."

In 1885 he won a scholarship at Eton, and joined the school in September, his elder brother Arthur being at the time a master there. After three or four years, he decided that he wished to compete for the Indian Civil Service, and in order to give him a better opportunity of success, he was removed from Eton to Wren's coaching establishment in London. It is not stated whether Hugh took up the work of preparation for the Indian Civil Service seriously. Anyhow, when he went up in the summer of 1890 he failed to pass, and it was decided that he should go up to Trinity College, Cambridge, to study for classical honours. He does not appear to have worked very hard, nor to have shown any intellectual promise. Having eventually decided to take Orders, he went in 1892 to study with Dean Vaughan, at Llandaff, and was ordained deacon by his father in Croydon parish church in 1894. He began his clerical work at the Eton mission, and was fully ordained in 1895, but at the end of 1896 his health broke down, and he went to Egypt for the winter with his mother and sister.

It was now that Hugh began to have doubts about the Anglican Church. He realized how very little that Church counted for abroad: it seemed to be something carried about with Englishmen wherever they went, like an



Indiarubber bath—to use his own somewhat irreverent simile ; it seemed quite foreign to the country where it was planted. Entering the Catholic church in a village in Egypt, he was struck by the contrast. It was a poor little mud building, but it seemed so obviously part of the place that for the first time it occurred to him, seriously, that Rome might after all be right. These uncomfortable feelings deepened as he journeyed home through Palestine, but a year at Kensing as curate somewhat soothed his anxieties. He then conceived the wish to practise the religious life, and was accepted as a probationer in the Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield. His first two years were spent mainly in study, and finally in July, 1901, he took the vows.

Hugh was destined to spend two more years at Mirfield ; the first of which passed happily enough, but then the old difficulties returned, and in such an intensified form that he left the Community in the early summer of 1903, and was received into the Catholic Church in September of the same year.

He has left us an account <sup>12</sup> of the steps which led to his conversion, and it may be well to summarize them briefly. He had gradually come to see "the need of a Teaching Church to preserve and interpret the truths of Christianity to each succeeding generation," and he saw too that this same Teaching Church must know her own mind with regard to the treasure committed to her charge. But when he considered the Anglican Church, he realized that it did not correspond to his expectations. Diverse views were allowed on certain vital points, such as the Sacra-



ment of Penance. He himself was convinced that it was essential to the forgiveness of mortal sins and that it formed an integral part of the sacramental system instituted by Jesus Christ ; but although this view was tolerated, "practically all the Bishops denied this, and a few of them the power of absolution altogether." In other words, he was simply teaching his own private opinion on a matter which was indefinite, so far as the Anglican Church was concerned. He saw the fallacy of relying on written formularies which can be interpreted in more senses than one, without a living voice to declare their real meaning, and that a Church which "appeals merely to ancient written words can be no more at the best than an antiquarian society." In this particular instance, the question of the Sacrament of Penance, he wished to know whether he might or might not teach penitents that they were bound to confess their mortal sins before Communion, but he could get no satisfactory answer. But this was only one case out of many, for there were many other questions which troubled him, and upon which he could get no definite teaching from the Anglican Church. To use his own words : "I saw round me a Church, which, even if tolerable in theory was intolerable in practice." On the other hand, he beheld the Catholic Church, which certainly knew its own mind, and which taught with the most refreshing clearness upon the subjects which troubled him ; but there were difficulties in the way of accepting its claims, such as the definition of the Immaculate Conception in the nineteenth century, and the Papal claims.

There seemed to Hugh to be nothing for it but



to plunge blindly into the bewildering maze of controversy and read what the Catholic Church's partisans and opponents had to say upon the matter. Gradually he began to realize things which he had never realized before. One of these things was to find that the true Church of Christ could not be an affair of intellect alone, otherwise the unlearned and slow-witted would be at an obvious disadvantage in the matter of salvation. "Humility and singleness of motive I saw now were far more important than patristic learning." Our Lord's words acquired in this light a new and unsuspected depth of meaning: "Unless you be converted and become as little children you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." <sup>13</sup> He began to pray more earnestly than ever for light, and at this stage of his journey certain books helped especially to "break down on one side the definite difficulties that stood between me and Rome, and on the other the last remnants of theory that held me to the Church of England." These books were Mallock's *Doctrine and Doctrinal Disruption*, Spencer Jones's *England and the Holy See*, and Newman's *The Development of Doctrine*, the last named of which "like a magician, waved away the floating mists, and let me see the City of God in her strength and beauty. He saw the Catholic Church as the true Church of the ages standing "upon the unshakeable foundation of the Gospel." He recognized her as the mystical Bride of Christ, and difficulty after difficulty melted as he looked upon her face. And then he turned and looked again at the Church of England and behold, there was an extraordinary change. "It was not that she had become un-



lovable. . . . She had a hundred virtues, a delicate speech, a romantic mind ; a pleasant aroma hung about her ; she was infinitely pathetic and appealing ; she had the advantage of dwelling in the shadowed twilight of her own vagueness, in glorious houses, even though not of her building ; she had certain gracious ways, pretty modes of expression ; her music and her language still seem to me extraordinarily beautiful ; and above all, she is the nursing mother of many of my best friends, and for over thirty years educated and nursed me too with indulgent kindness. . . . There, then, she stood, my old mistress, pathetic and loving, claiming me as her servant by every human tie ; and there on the other side, in a blaze of fierce light, stood the Bride of Christ, dominant and imperious but with a look in her eyes, and a smile on her lips, that could only rise from a heavenly vision, claiming me, not because she had as yet done anything for me, not because I was an Englishman who loved English ways or even an Italian, for the matter of that—but simply and solely because I was a child of God, and because to her He had said : ‘Take away this child for Me and I will give thee thy wages’ ; because, first and last, she was His Bride, and I was His son.” In other words, he had now become convinced of the truth of the Catholic Church’s claims, and so felt it his duty to sever his connection with the Community at Mirfield.

The months which elapsed after Hugh left Mirfield and before he was received into the Catholic Church were spent at “Tremans,” his mother’s secluded house at Horsted Keynes in Sussex. He had made up his mind that it was



his duty to become a Catholic and had made this clear to his mother, from whom he had no secrets, but at her request, he waited in order to allow time for a reaction, if such should come. He passed the time in writing an historical novel, *By What Authority?* an occupation which not only proved to be a safety-valve for his sorely tried spirits, but also enabled him to see more clearly than ever that the Anglican Communion possessed no identity of life with the ancient Church in England. By the beginning of September the novel was three-quarters finished, and on September 11th its author was received into the Catholic Church at Woodchester by Father Reginald Buckler, O.P.

Hugh Benson left England for Rome on All Saints' Day, 1903, and before leaving had the satisfaction of putting the finishing touches to his first novel, *By What Authority?* A year later he returned to England, a duly ordained priest of the Catholic Church, and ere long settled down at Cambridge, where he took up his residence with Monsignor Barnes at Llandaff House. He passed two or three years at Cambridge, but began to realize that his work lay more in the direction of writing and preaching than in purely pastoral duties. Moreover, he was now beginning to make an income from his books, and so was able to give effect to the project which had shaped itself in his mind. He proposed to make for himself a home in some secluded spot, where he would be freed from interruptions, and where he might read and write and from time to time go forth to preach as occasion presented itself. "A small Perpendicular chapel and a whitewashed cottage next door is what I want just now," he wrote



about this time: "it must be in a sweet and secret place—preferably in Cornwall." <sup>14</sup> The result was the purchase of a house in the hamlet of Hare Street, near Buntingford, where he spent the last seven years of his life.

Hare Street House <sup>15</sup> is an old-fashioned house standing a little way back from the main road which passes through the village. The front is a later addition, but the building itself dates back to Tudor times. When Hugh Benson bought it, it had not been occupied for a long while, and so the property was practically a wilderness. When he died it had been transformed, and stamped with his own peculiar individuality. He laid out the grounds to suit his fancy, and one of his last acts in this direction was to plan a rose-garden at the back of the house—an idea which was to have been put into execution on his return from the visit to Salford which proved his last. He found an old brew-house and a bake-house behind the house: the former he turned into a chapel, the latter he pulled down and re-built on a much smaller scale as a sacristy. A rood screen was formed out of one of the heavy brew-house beams, the figure on the top being carved by himself and a friend out of one of the lime-trees in the garden. So, too, with the other accessories of the little chapel, either the owner himself had a direct hand in them, or they were the outcome of his suggestions. It is the same with the house—turn where you will you find reminiscences of the owner. If you go into the delightful study where he used to write, you will find all round the walls above the panelling an elaborate tapestry representing various personages, including himself, in quest of the Holy Grail.



The figures, which were cut out by an artist friend, were sewn on to the background and all the tapestry-work done by the owner. If you pass from the study into the library, you will find similar traces of his activity in the choice and arrangement of the books which line the walls. Or if you go upstairs, you will find in the central bedroom another piece of tapestry representing a somewhat gruesome subject, "Death," once again in conception and execution the work of Hugh Benson. Whenever you ask the history of any object that strikes you, you receive almost invariably the same reply, that the owner of the house made it himself or had a hand in its production, or had some particular idea in connection with it. Surely never was a place more stamped with the individuality of a man than Hare Street House and grounds are stamped with the individuality of Hugh Benson.

It was thus that a hamlet in Hertfordshire became the home of this gifted man, and that Hare Street House became the centre of an influence which not only made itself felt throughout the length and breadth of England but even in distant parts. He went to Rome on three different occasions to preach courses of sermons, and three times visited America to lecture and preach ; but, naturally enough, his most strenuous activities were confined to England. He was always doing something—preaching here, or lecturing there, or giving a Retreat at some convent, and yet he found time on his return to Hare Street House to write book after book, and to deal with an enormous correspondence. It is difficult to conceive how any man could accomplish so much work, but there was a motive force in Hugh Benson



which impelled him on and sustained him, and enabled him to work unceasingly at the highest pressure.

About a year before his death he wrote : " I am being obliged to draw in my horns and economize time, and everything else just now, as I am on the very edge of my capacities." It was thus that he worked—on the very edge of his capacities—and he maintained this tremendous rate of speed up to the end, when the overdriven machine broke down completely, and Hugh Benson died at an age when most men reach the maturity of their powers, worn out by his own untiring and indomitable energy. He seems to have considered that his best work would be done before the age of forty, and that he must work himself out by then, like a runner who knows that he has a certain distance to go and must run himself out by the time he breasts the tape. He succeeded in accomplishing his aim, and when he died, at the age of forty-two, he had, to use the metaphor of the athlete, run himself to a standstill. " Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly " ; <sup>16</sup> and certainly this was true of Hugh Benson. We have it on the authority of those who knew him, that whatever he did, he did with a certain concentrated energy which showed that he was heart and soul in it. Whether it was a book, or a letter, or a game, or a conversation, he gave his whole attention to it ; and no one who has ever heard him preach could fail to be struck by this characteristic.

The hand of death struck him down in the very midst of his strenuous activities, and he died as he had lived, clear-minded to the last. This feature of his death seems to have impressed



itself upon his brother, who was present, and who has recorded his impressions in the following expressive words: "It was wonderful indeed! It seemed to me then, in that moment, strange rather than sad. He had been *himself* to the very end, no diminution of vigour, no yielding, no humiliation, with all his old courtesy and thoughtfulness, and collectedness—that is the only word I can use. I recognized that we were only the spectators, and that he was in command of the scene. He had made haste to die, and he had gone as he was always used to do, straight from one finished task to another that waited for him. It was not like an end; it was as though he had turned a corner and was passing on, out of sight but still unquestionably there. It seemed to me like the death of a soldier or a knight in its calmness of courage, its splendid facing of the last extremity, its magnificent determination to experience, open-eyed and vigilant, the dark crossing." <sup>17</sup>

Hugh Benson died at Bishop's House, Salford, on October 19, 1914, aged forty-two years and eleven months. He had gone there on Saturday, October 10th, to deliver the second of a course of sermons which he was preaching at Salford Cathedral during the month of October. On Monday the 12th he was so ill that he could not leave Salford, and all immediate engagements were cancelled. A few days later pneumonia supervened, and as his heart was not sufficiently strong to stand the strain, he passed away in the early hours of the following Monday.

A paper of directions was found stating that he wished to be interred at Hare Street House. Thither accordingly his body was conveyed, and



there on Friday the 23rd October, after a solemn Requiem in the little chapel, he was laid to rest in his own orchard, close to the Calvary which he had himself erected. There seems a certain appropriateness in the fact that he who had been the living soul of Hare Street House should be buried in the very spot which he had loved so well and upon which he had contrived to stamp so wonderfully the impress of his own marked individuality.

### THE MAN

And now comes the task of appraising the man himself. He was so many-sided that it is difficult to know where to begin ; but perhaps it will be simpler to lay special stress on that aspect of his life by which he was able to reach the greatest number of persons. A man may have great eloquence, and may be able to draw great congregations, but the power of the spoken word is limited in extent, though doubtless more potent in its immediate efficacy. The human voice cannot carry beyond a certain range, it is circumscribed by the holding capacity of buildings ; it cannot stand very much prolonged strain, and though its immediate efficacy is sometimes astonishing, yet, as regards diffusion and ability to reach all classes and conditions of men, it cannot compare with the written word. Let us therefore begin with Hugh Benson as a man of letters, and say something about the numerous books which were the offspring of his ever-active pen.

The first thing that strikes one is his amazing fertility. He began writing books about ten years before he died, but before his hand was stilled by death he had written more than a score, most



of them novels of considerable length, many of which must have entailed no small amount of reading. He wrote some half-dozen historical romances, for example, which must have involved a good deal of serious study. Indeed, he has himself given us an insight into his painstaking efforts when he wrote his first historical romance, *By What Authority?* for in *Confessions of a Convert* we find the following allusion to it: "I worked for about eight or ten hours every day, either writing or reading or annotating every historical book and pamphlet I could lay my hands upon. I found paragraphs in magazines, single sentences in certain essays, and all of these I somehow worked into the material from which my book grew."

It was the same, too, with the historical romances which he wrote later on in life. If any one imagines that these romances are the effervescences of a brilliant imagination, let him turn for example to the Preface of *Come Rack! Come Rope!* (published in 1912) and he will find himself disillusioned. The writer states that nearly the whole book is sober historical fact, and acknowledges his indebtedness to "a pile of some twenty or thirty books" which were on his table as he wrote.

It would seem, then, that he was a painstaking writer, although his books give one the idea that writing came quite naturally to him, and that he dashed them off at full speed, with scarcely a pause for reflection.

Most readers of his books would probably be of the opinion that Hugh Benson's peculiar gifts as a writer were displayed to best advantage in works of pure fiction. When chained down to definite facts in history, his imaginative powers



were not given full scope ; but he revelled in analysis of character, and was seen at his very best in the creations of his own vivid imagination. For this reason if we would seek for any self-revelation in his writings it is to these books that we must turn, and we have a goodly number to draw material from. We have Mr. Arthur Benson's authority for the statement that his brother's books "are all projections of his own personality into his characters. He is behind them all, and writing with Hugh was like so many things that he did, a game which he played with all his might." <sup>18</sup> With this statement I am quite ready to agree, though I must confess that I do not share his admiration for *The Light Invisible*. The tales have not a genuine ring about them ; they seem rather like the creations of one groping after something, and yet not knowing exactly what it is that he wishes to express, and so, as a consequence, they are unsatisfying. The explanation of this is given in *Confessions of a Convert* : "For myself, I dislike, quite intensely, *The Light Invisible* from the spiritual point of view. I wrote it in moods of great feverishness and in what I now recognize as a very subtle state of sentimentality ; I was striving to reassure myself of the truths of religion, and assume, therefore, a positive and assertive tone that was largely insincere."

However, apart from *The Light Invisible*, we have over a dozen works of pure fiction to draw upon, and in these we find certain elements which are constantly recurring, and so we may safely conclude that these are projections of the writer himself. One of the things which impresses itself upon the reader is, what may be called the



mystical element. By this is meant the writer's realization of things unseen, and his conviction that it is these which really matter, and that union with God by prayer is the true work of earthly life. He has found in the Catholic Church's teaching the solution of his difficulties, and in the teaching of her great mystics the explanation of the mysteries of prayer—that wonderful power which can unlock as it were the very gates of heaven, and influence earthly destinies in a way unsuspected by the majority of men. As Tennyson so well expresses it :—

More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice  
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.  
For what are men better than sheep or goats,  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer  
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?  
For so the whole round earth is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God. 19

And so, as we might expect, Hugh Benson's admiration for members of the contemplative orders is unbounded, for they draw from the very fountain-head of power, and their influence is diffused far and wide. By contemplatives he does not mean only those who withdraw from the world and devote their lives to prayer, but those also who, whilst living in the world, have passed through the lower degrees of prayer, and attained to the prayer of contemplation. Such we might call mystics, meaning by the word those who in prayer have attained to a certain conscious realization of the unseen—that conscious realization which comes to the soul which has reached the stage of contemplation.



As has been stated at the commencement of this pamphlet, there are some who claim that this state of soul is within the reach of all. The grace of contemplation according to this view is not something reserved for certain favoured souls, and denied to others, no matter how much they may strive after it. No soul can attain to this state without God's grace, but this grace is not denied to those who are sufficiently generous in the path of self-renunciation. The fact that contemplatives in the world are rare is because comparatively few are sufficiently generous in their efforts after perfection. But when the soul has reached this stage of prayer, and attained to contemplation, then it must have reached a state of detachment from earthly things and union with God which give it a wonderful power, and which is a source of ceaseless activities. These activities may manifest themselves in a life of prayer, if the soul has the vocation ; or they may manifest themselves in active exterior works and an untiring energy in carrying out God's work in whatever state of life the contemplative may be. To imagine that a mystic is a dreamy person who has no relations with this world, but who is ever wrapped apart in ecstasy, is to belie true mysticism, and to give it a reputation which it does not deserve. The truth is that the true mystic is very actively employed, for the source of his activities is found in prayer, and it would be easy to bring forward examples of the wonderful capacity for work possessed by men and women who have reached the higher degrees of prayer.

This seems to have been the case with Hugh Benson. There is scarcely a book of his which



does not touch on prayer, and in some we find attempts to describe in words the actual experiences of contemplation—in fact, we might almost call prayer and its influence the underlying *motif* of his books. We can trace it right through from the very first book which he wrote to the last. *The Light Invisible* was written before he became a Catholic, but one of the stories contained in it, "In the Convent Chapel," deals with this subject, and emphasizes the activity of a life of prayer; whilst in his very last book, *Loneliness*, which was not published till after he died, the heroine, after worldly disappointments, finds in prayer before the Tabernacle that "so far from being mere emptiness, all else seemed empty beside it."

One of his books, *Richard Raynal*, is devoted entirely to the history of a solitary, and though the book is purposely archaic in style, and so not very characteristic of the writer, one cannot help feeling that the man who wrote it must have had some experience in contemplative prayer, or at all events must have been extraordinarily interested in the subject. This impression is deepened as one reads others of the author's books: though the writer is professedly writing romances, there are many passages regarding prayer, and more than one attempt to describe the experience of contemplation. Take, for example, the following passage from *Lord of the World* <sup>20</sup> :—

"He began, as his custom was in mental prayer, by a deliberate act of self-exclusion from the world of sense. Under the image of sinking beneath a surface he forced himself downwards and inwards, till the peal of the organ, the shuffle of footsteps, the rigidity of the chair-back



beneath his wrists—all seemed apart and external, and he was left a single person with a beating heart, an intellect that suggested image after image, and emotions that were too languid to stir themselves. Then he made his second descent, renounced all that he possessed and was, and became conscious that even the body was left behind, and that his mind and heart, awed by the Presence in which they found themselves, clung close and obedient to the will, which was their lord and protector. He drew another long breath, or two, as he felt that Presence surge about him ; he repeated a few mechanical words and sank to that peace which follows the relinquishment of thought. There he rested for awhile. Far above him sounded the ecstatic music, the cry of trumpets and the shrilling of the flutes, but they were as insignificant street noises to one who was falling asleep. He was within the veil of things now, beyond the barriers of sense and reflection, in that secret place to which he had learnt the road by endless effort, in that strange region where realities are evident, where perceptions go to and fro with the swiftness of light, where the swaying will catches now this now that act, moulds it and speeds it ; where all things meet, where truth is handled and known and tasted, where God Immanent is one with God Transcendent, where the meaning of the external world is evident through its inner side, and the Church and its mysteries are seen from within a haze of glory."

I have transcribed this passage at length because I think it is characteristic of the writer. It would seem that the man who wrote this passage must have had some experience of what he is attempting to describe ; and this view is con-



firmed by other passages in the author's works. The processes of the spiritual life are evidently realities to him. Witness how in more than one of his books we come across a certain type of man—the man who has passed through the different stages of the spiritual life and attained apparently to the "Unitive" way. The author evidently looks upon these as ideal types,<sup>21</sup> fitted to be the guides and counsellors of others, whether they make contemplation the great object of their lives, or whether they are living in the world. Such, for example, are Mr. Rolls in *The Sentimentalists*, Christopher Dell in *The Conventionalists*, and Mr. Morpeth in *Initiation*—men who have been purified by trials and who have found in prayer the secret of peace of soul. Again in *The Dawn of All*, where he tries to depict the world from the standpoint of futurity, on the supposition that the Catholic Church grows powerful, the writer depicts Ireland as the contemplative Monastery of Europe, and at the same time as a great mental hospital. The contemplative becomes a physician competent to treat all cases of strain and mental breakdown, for he has the faculty of imparting in a certain degree to others the peace to which he himself has attained.

Other examples such as this might be quoted in which Hugh Benson speaks of prayer and of its influence. There is a story told in classical mythology of a man who unravelled the mystery of a certain labyrinth by means of a golden thread. Hugh Benson found in prayer the key to unlock the mysteries of God's world, and one sees it like a golden thread running through his different works and linking them together. He even tries to express in popular terms the intri-



cacies of the spiritual life, with its three broad divisions of purgative, illuminative, and unitive ways, and he chooses as the subject of such experiences, not, as one might expect, a member of a contemplative order, but a man who is tramping the roads,<sup>22</sup> as though to show that in his opinion these experiences are within the reach of all who are sufficiently generous, and who correspond faithfully with grace. Those who are interested will be able to read a more devotional treatment of the same subject in his *The Friendship of Christ*.<sup>23</sup>

I have heard it said, I know not upon what authority, that Hugh Benson felt strongly drawn to the Carthusians, and would willingly have exchanged the cassock and the active life for the Carthusian habit and the life of contemplation. It may be true, but there is many a man to whom the Carthusian life appeals, and who, nevertheless, has not the necessary vocation. There is, for example, the well-known instance of Blessed Thomas More, and any Carthusian monastery could tell a tale regarding those who come, but do not stay ; for as a Carthusian writer observes : " There are vocations which come from God, and others which come from the imagination." <sup>24</sup> Be that as it may, Hugh Benson never even tried his vocation, and one cannot help thinking that his peculiar talents displayed themselves to best advantage in the active life. But that he had leanings towards the contemplative life is evident from his writings.

He was passionately convinced of the truth of the Catholic Church's claims, and under her influence his fine talents were developed as the sun expands the petals of a flower and exposes its



beauty to the eye. He had never shown any great promise before he became a Catholic, and although he was over thirty when received into the Church, he had only made one incursion into the domain of literature. His book *The Light Invisible*, written when he was an Anglican, has merits from the literary point of view, but the tales fail to grip the reader as his later works do. This is particularly noticeable if one compares it with *A Mirror of Shalott*, in which tales of the same character are handled with far greater certainty and power. Indeed, the Catholic Church seems to have fully satisfied his aspirations and he discovered in her the ideal which he had been seeking. In the light which her teaching shed across his life, his dormant powers awoke, and he was able to express himself in a way that had never been possible to him before. His whole-hearted acceptance of her claims generated in him—to use an expression of his own—a certain fixity of devotion<sup>25</sup> that became the driving force in his life. It was his passionate conviction that she is the divinely appointed teacher of mankind, that she is the true guide in the union of the soul with God, and that in the teaching of her saints and mystics is contained the secret of those mysterious experiences of the soul in prayer, a certain measure of which had fallen to his lot, which produced in him the “fixity of devotion” that urged him to spend himself utterly in the Church’s service, with such concentrated energy that his over-taxed constitution gave way beneath the strain, and he died when he had lived but little more than half man’s normal span of mortal life.

Those who had the privilege of knowing him



personally speak of a certain charm of manner and conversation, and of an engaging simplicity. He could speak about his own doings with an entire absence of affectation, and was always ready to listen to criticisms of his writings. Surely this is a sign of true humility, for it must be remembered that he was a preacher with a brilliant reputation, a writer whose books had an immense circulation, and one who was much sought after as a spiritual guide. But none of these things spoilt his simplicity—nay rather, we have his brother's testimony<sup>26</sup> to the fact that his modesty seemed to increase with years.

Those who have heard Hugh Benson preach will not easily forget the impression. The boyish face with the shock of untidy-looking hair, the slight figure, and the somewhat awkward poise, did not augur well ; but when he had warmed to his work, he held his hearers almost spellbound, and this too in spite of defects of speech and manner ; for he had not a good speaking voice, and it sounded strained at times almost to breaking point. He made use of scarcely any gestures, and such as he employed might well have been dispensed with ; but as one listened to the flood of eloquence, and saw the slight form swaying hither and thither in its impassioned energy, one forgot all defects of utterance and delivery, and felt carried away by the intensity of the preacher's conviction. This, I take it, was the secret of his success as a preacher—his overwhelming earnestness. Here was a man who, in spite of certain obvious oratorical defects, said what he had to say with such a fire of passionate conviction, and with such concentrated energy of purpose, that one could not help listening to



his burning words. Hence it was that wherever he went his success as a preacher was remarkable, and it is said that sometimes he was engaged for as much as two years in advance.

Of his powers as a spiritual guide I cannot speak, from want of matter. One book<sup>27</sup> has appeared since his death on this subject, but it is not comprehensive enough to enable one to form an estimate. However, it conveys the impression that he himself was partly right when he said to his brother,<sup>28</sup> "I am not the man to *prop* ; I can kindle sometimes, but not support." His gifts lay rather in other directions, and although no doubt he was capable as a spiritual guide, at all events to those whose natures he understood, yet his very impulsiveness, curbed as it was by grace, must have been somewhat opposed to the calmness and maturity of judgement and ripeness of experience demanded of one who is to be conspicuous as a guide to souls.

It would seem, then, that one of the lessons of Hugh Benson's life is the value of prayer. The spiritual world is the great world of realities, and it is by prayer that the soul comes in contact with these realities. The measure of the soul's union with God in prayer is the measure of the soul's whole-hearted devotion to God's service, and in the Catholic Church he found the ideal which he had been seeking. Here was the Bride of Christ, Christ's mystical Body, in whom he had been incorporated and in whose life he shared, so that his whole being became permeated by her spirit and his pulses beat with supernatural energy. In her he found a safe guide in the path of prayer—one who, with the experience of nineteen centuries behind her, could guide his soul to



an ever closer union with Almighty God, and so help him to interpret life's difficulties aright. It was because he realized this so intensely that he worked with such concentrated energy, and did so much work in so amazingly short a time.

In recognition of his services to the Catholic cause, the late Holy Father Pius X in 1911 made him one of his supernumerary private chamberlains, a dignity carrying with it the title of Monsignor, and it was under the title of Monsignor Benson that he was best known to the world at large. But no ecclesiastical dignities could enhance the reputation which his own sterling qualities had won for him. It was not because he could prefix Monsignor to his name that he became so well known and exercised so wide an influence, but because he was Hugh Benson, priest of the Catholic Church, who utilized to such good purpose the brilliant gifts with which God had endowed him.

#### CONCLUSION

And now this well-known figure has passed away and we shall see him no more, but he has left a gracious memory behind him, and the far reaching influence of a stimulating example. We cannot emulate his work, for we have not his gifts, but we can all do our best to imitate him, and to cultivate to the best such gifts as God has given us.

Hugh Benson was one to whom "five talents" had been committed, and who "gained other five." He cultivated the good gifts which God had given him and consecrated them entirely to His service. Fearless in his convictions, he embraced the Catholic religion as soon as he was



satisfied as to the Church's claims, and although the members of his family were very sympathetic in their treatment of him, it needed no small courage for the son of an Anglican Archbishop to abjure his father's faith. But the sacrifice was rewarded by a passionate conviction which called out all his powers, to be used in the Church's service with a whole-hearted devotion which has not often been surpassed.

It is but a few short years since he became a Catholic, went to Rome, was ordained a priest, and came back to England, and now he is gone for ever. But in that short span of life what wonderful activities were crowded! Whilst he was among us, we could scarcely open a Catholic paper without finding some traces of his busy life. He was preaching here, or lecturing there, or giving a retreat, or he was present at some public function, or at some social gathering. And then from time to time, at wonderfully short intervals, some book or other would appear, a silent tribute to his tireless pen. "How can he do it all? How does he find the time?" Such were the questions we asked ourselves as we were confronted by his bewildering activities. But now that he is dead, we know at what cost to himself that tremendous activity was kept up. He lived, to use his own phrase, "on the very edge of his capacities," and any one who has ever tried to do this can best understand what heroism such a life involved. He had wonderful gifts and he determined that they should not be wasted, but that they should be cultivated and wholly consecrated to His Master's glory. Therefore he did not spare himself, but gave of his very best in the Church's service, working until the pen fell from



his tired fingers, and his tireless energy was stilled by death.

And so he passes away from our midst, leaving behind him the record of great achievements. Like a meteor he flashed across the sky ; like a meteor he burnt himself out by the very rapidity of his motion, leaving behind him a trail of light. He has bequeathed to us the memory of a powerful preacher, of a brilliant writer, and of a skilled controversialist. But above all we like to think of him as a priest whose priesthood meant everything to him, and who was determined to tread as closely as he could in the footsteps of his Master. He realized intensely the part which suffering plays in a world which has been wrecked by sin, and the book in which he expresses himself upon this subject, *Initiation*, is, in the opinion of some, the very best he ever wrote. One of the reasons for his unbounded admiration of members of the contemplative orders is to be found in the fact that they expiate for sin. "Why, they're the princes of the world ! They are models of the Crucified. So long as there is sin in the world, so long must there be Penance. The instant Christianity was accepted, the Cross stood up dominant once more. . . And then people understood. Why, they're the Holy Ones of the universe—higher than angels ; for they suffer." 29

Let those who would know something of his inner life turn to his book *The Friendship of Christ*, where they will find an illuminating description of the different phases of the spiritual life. They will learn how friendship with Christ is the very secret of the saints, how this process of friendship is evolved in the triple way of purga-



tion, illumination, and union, and how "the most sacred experiences of life are barren unless His friendship sanctifies them." 30 They will realize better that "the Church is the Body in which Christ dwells and energizes, that the Blessed Sacrament is Himself in the very human nature in which He lived on earth, and now triumphs in Heaven, that the sanctity of the saints is His own, that sacerdotal words and actions are the words and actions of the Eternal Priest, and that the supreme claim of sinners or other persons lies in the presence of Christ outraged and crucified or neglected within them." They will learn too that Christ in the Tabernacle meant to him the living Presence of a Friend, and this is a lesson which every Catholic can strive to lay to heart. Let us take farewell of him, then, before the Tabernacle, in the Presence of his Friend and ours, and close this all-imperfect sketch with a verse from one of his poems :—

Nay! but with faith I sought my Lord last night,  
And found Him shining where the lamp was dim;  
The shadowy altar glimmered height on height,  
A throne for Him:  
Seen as through lattice-work, His gracious Face  
Looked forth on me, and filled the dark with grace.



## NOTES

1. This biography is in the competent hands of the Rev. C. C. Martindale, S.J.
2. *Mysticism*, by Rev. A. B. Sharpe, M.A. (C.T.S., 1d.), p. 3.
3. *Mystical Contemplation*, by E. Lamballe (Washbourne).
4. *Ibid.* p. 51.
5. *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book I. ch. vii.
6. *Mystical Contemplation*, p. 90.
7. *The Love of God*, by St. Francis de Sales, Book VI. ch. iii.
8. *Ibid.* Book VII. ch. i.
9. *Mystical Contemplation*, p. 98.
10. *Ibid.* p. 100.
11. *Thesaurus Fidelium* (Longmans), p. vii.
12. *Confessions of a Convert* (Longmans), from which the quotations on pp. 7-10 are taken. See also *A City Set on a Hill* (C.T.S., 3d.).
13. Matt. xviii. 3.
14. *Hugh*, p. 153.
15. There is a description of this house in *Oddsfisk!*
16. Eccles. ix. 10.
17. *Hugh*, p. 191.
18. *Ibid.* p. 169.
19. *Morte d'Arthur*.
20. Cf. also Fr. Girdlestone's tale in *A Mirror of Shalott*.
21. He calls them "mystics." See *The Conventionalists*, p. 126.
22. *None Other Gods*, Part ii. ch. vi.
23. Pp. 22-42.
24. *La Grande Chartreuse*, par un Chartreux, p. 306.
25. *None Other Gods*, p. 204.
26. *Hugh*, p. 229.
27. *Spiritual Letters of Monsignor Benson to one of his Converts*.
28. *Hugh*, p. 152.
29. *The Dawn of All*, p. 83.
30. *The Friendship of Christ*, p. 12.



# INFALLIBILITY AND TRADITION

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BY THE VERY REV. MONSIGNOR BENSON, M.A.

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[The following paper was read in May, 1907, before the Society of St. Thomas of Canterbury—an organization of Anglican clergy for the purpose of studying the history of Western Christendom. A few phrases only have been altered to render the paper more suitable for publication.—R. H. B.]

It has been very well observed that there is no such thing as an impartial historian. Every man who sets out to trace the development of life, whether in politics, religion, or art, is bound to do so with some theory in his mind. The word "progress" is meaningless unless there is to the mind of him who uses it some ideal standard or goal to which his idea of progress is related.

We may express this truth in slightly different language by saying that, strictly speaking, all historical argument must be deductive. It is impossible for us to approach incidents or records without a bias of some kind; we cannot, literally speaking, read the simplest statement without bringing to its interpretation our own sense of eternal fitness, without judging it, even though unconsciously, by some standard of right which we acknowledge as supreme. The historian, or the theologian, who is most nearly impartial is not he who has no view, but he who is aware of other views, and can give them due consideration.

I begin, therefore, at the outset of this paper, by confessing that I approach the subject in this spirit. It is not my intention to pretend, even to myself, that I am wholly impartial; but this does not necessarily



involve a *petitio principii*. It will be my aim to put forward a thesis, to come, as it were, to the complicated wards of ecclesiastical politics with a key in my hand, which, I have reason to believe, will be found to fit them. It is in no sense a key of my own manufacture ; I do not pretend to the slightest originality. It is only my belief that the Hand that made the wards made also the key, and designed them one for the other. If I had any other belief than this I should not dare to put it forward at all.

Next, as a matter of preface, I wish to say that I shall attempt to follow in this paper a suggestion made to me by one who proposed that it should be written. He said that the line he had thought of was one that followed some words of Schanz, to the effect that it was impossible to understand the dogma of Infallibility without first understanding what was meant by the development of the Church's life. I have, accordingly, attempted to compose this paper on these lines, and to treat of Tradition, strictly so called, comparatively slightly, as being a kind of running comment made by history upon the development of that life.

## I

Before approaching the subject directly it is necessary to say a word or two as to what we conceive to be the general nature of the Catholic Church. There are innumerable images and metaphors used of her in the Scriptures and the Fathers, but perhaps the most usual as well as the most comprehensive is that phrase in which we speak of her as the Mystical Body of Christ on earth ; and it is a remarkable fact that recent science gives a significance to this phrase which was certainly not explicit to the minds of those who first used it—I mean the scientific facts that an organic body consists of cells which themselves have a certain independent existence, although that existence, normally speaking,



is obscured by the greater unity in which it is merged ; and next, that the unity of all the cells together is an inexplicable and transcendent unity dependent on a principle of which science can give us no adequate account. That the independent existence of the cells is a fact, and not merely an idea, is illustrated by the phenomena that follow dissolution. The body dies, as we say, at a certain moment ; the unity is dissolved, but the cells yet retain, for a certain period, each its own vitality. The application of this image to the Body of Christ, illustrating as it does the principle of life, which makes her one and lifts her into a mysterious identity with the life of Christ, is sufficiently suggestive to need no comment on this occasion.

The Church, then, as we conceive of it, is an organic whole. (I am not dealing here with the larger sense in which the word "Church" is used as denoting that greater body which includes the departed, but only with that, itself frequently employed in the Scriptures, which signifies the company of those still on earth who are united by grace with one another in some sort of external communion and with Christ their head.) It is an organic whole, therefore—for if it is not in a real sense organic, the word loses all meaning—consisting of human persons upon earth lifted by virtue of grace to an unity one with another into something that transcends the vitality of each. They are lifted, that is, into a kind of transcendent personality which is, in a sense, identical with that of Christ. "I am the vine, ye are the branches," said our Lord. "We have the mind of Christ," echoes St. Paul. It is in this sense only that we give what is strictly divine faith to the decisions of the Church—in whatever sense we may understand her constitution—we bow to her as we bow to God, not merely because she is His vicegerent, but because in a real sense she is Himself in terms of human nature. It may be that our theories of her constitution lead us to believe either that her voice is no longer



articulate, or that it is obscured by human passions in these latter days; but in theory at least I take it that all who claim the name of Catholic believe in her essential divinity, and, in some manner, in the identity of her mind, and what I may call her personality, with the mind and personality of Jesus Christ.

Starting with these premisses, then, we notice a number of points which, if we attach any analogical value at all to that image of an organic body of which I have spoken, we are bound, I think, to concede.

1. She may be considered from her two sides, the human and the divine; just as the ordinary human body of a man may be approached by the biologist or the friend. To the one it is but a collection of cells, related one to another and controlled by certain laws; to the other it is a tabernacle of a soul. I say two sides, although as a matter of fact there are a hundred. The artist also has his point of view, the athlete another, the psychologist another. Yet these two sides sufficiently, I think, include them all under two main divisions.

2. But further, if we look into what we mean by the word "consciousness" as applied to a sentient, reflective being, we see that it is of a double nature. There is, first, that ordinary reflective action by which we become aware of this or that; and there is, secondly, that deep inner life which acts automatically and independently of the will. There is that process by which we became aware of the laws of our being and of the world in which we live, and there is that inner process which acts, as in sleep, keeping us in life altogether apart from our conscious volition. Now, very roughly, we may say that these two departments of our nature correspond to the human and the divine lives of the Church—to her active consciousness at any given moment and her divine instinct; and it is no argument against the existence of a law of our being to say that that law has not been always explicitly recognized by our reflective faculties.



So long as we find that the law has been acted upon, that it explains phenomena, that it is correlated to other known laws—beyond all, if we find that there have been moments in the past when it *has* apparently been recognized and deliberately appealed to by our direct consciousness, we need find no difficulty in the fact that that consciousness has not been always explicit and continuous.

3. Approaching now more closely to the direct subject under consideration, we may notice, before we come to closer quarters, first that infallibility in some sense may well be one of such laws, fundamental and essential, yet not always explicitly recognized by every one at every moment. For infallibility in its barest sense means no more than this—that the divine consciousness of the Church is related in such manner to the human consciousness that it safeguards it from formulating a statement in contradiction to truth. There is, it is claimed, such a channel open between the mind of Christ and the aggregate of the minds that compose His mystical consciousness, that the former controls and checks the latter. It is not inspiration that is claimed—not a miraculous flooding of the human minds with knowledge beyond that originally deposited in them, but a steady restraint exercised upon them to such a degree that they will never formulate what is actually untrue. More than this is not claimed; less than this would be to evacuate our Lord's promises of all meaning, as well as to destroy all our confidence in revealed truth. Infallibility, then, as so understood, may well be one such law as those of which I have spoken—a prerogative attached to the whole body of Christ, yet not always as evident as later definitions have made it.

4. In this manner, therefore, we find the reconciliation between such facts as the steady claim that the Church's doctrine is unchanging, on one side, and that the decree of the Immaculate Conception, on the other,



was not proclaimed until the 19th century. It lay there, theologians tell us, revealed from the beginning; it was a part of the *depositum* stored in that transcendent consciousness which we may call on one side the Mind of Christ, and, in virtue of the identity between them, the Mind of the Church; yet it had not been made explicit in such a sense that there were not many who were unaware of it, even to such a degree as apparently to contradict it, or at least to ignore it when the subject was under discussion. In such a sense as this Pius X has an explicit knowledge which Pius I had not.

So St. Vincent, in his *Commonitorium*, writes:—

“Fitting it is, therefore, that the understanding, knowledge, and wisdom, as well of every man in particular as of all in common; as well of one alone as of the whole Church in general, should, by the advance of ages, abundantly increase and go forward, but yet, for all that, only in its own kind and nature; that is, in the same doctrine, in the same sense, in the same judgement.”

He proceeds then to compare this development to the growth of a man from childhood:—

“If any parts there be,” he writes, “which with the increase of more mature years spring forth, those before were in man virtually planted in manner as the seed, so that no new thing do come forth in old men, which before had not lain hid in them being children” (*Common.* xxiii.).

This argument is, of course, the backbone of the whole of Newman's *Development*. As regards the further question as to whether such increase of knowledge is merely by syllogistic reasoning from premisses originally deposited, or, as St. Vincent hints, by an actual process of a growth from germs and rudiments, it is unnecessary to speak. Theologians are to be found on either side who lay stress on the one aspect or the other. I say “aspect,” since it is a further point of discussion as to whether there is any real difference



between the two theories. Certainly all development does take place by argued reasoning and syllogisms, and never without it ; yet the old premisses must always to some extent be developed by new discoveries in other realms than those of revelation, and thereby the conclusions be developed too. However, this is beside our point.

5. We notice that the identity of the aggregate of minds that compose the Church with the actual mind of Christ is conditioned by various points. While in a passive sense the identity is continuous, so that the Church cannot universally and formally hold a doctrine contrary to truth, yet, for the purpose of definition, infallibility is not brought into play except under very narrow and definite limitations. It is only on a certain body of knowledge that infallibility is claimed at all ; and this is further limited by other conditions—those, I mean, that belong to the constitution of a Council or the circumstances under which the Pope is held to speak *ex cathedra*.

6. Lastly, under this first head, we must consider the place of tradition in the life of the Church : and first let us clear our minds of the strange fancy that there is such a thing as traditions binding *defide* that have never been written down at all. There is, of course, a floating body of opinion—an atmosphere, indeed, rather than opinion—a temper of mind which gives colour and intensity to the doctrines held, but this is not the tradition which the Church calls one of her founts of truth. There is, further, another yet inner atmosphere, called pious opinion, often written down by saints and sages, and embodied, it may be, in the writings of Popes and the arguments of Councils ; but this, no more than the temper of mind characteristic of the Church, can be called tradition. Tradition rather is a fixed body of truth scattered through the works of the Fathers and the publications of Councils dealing with definite doctrines and statements, and these are as



continuous and unchanging as the doctrines directly contained in Scripture, though subject, like them, and indeed like all knowledge, to a continuous development of expression on the part of the *Ecclesia docens*, and of apprehension by the *Ecclesia discens*. The temper of mind and the pious opinions expressed from age to age may and do change their very substance; these may be actually faulty, and are often found to be so, even though it is true that, like the serum that forms over a wound, they may be necessary at a given time to the preservation of a vital truth, yet in themselves be transient and temporary. An example of such may be found in the meanings attached to the phrase, *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. There is no doubt that a few centuries ago the common interpretation of these words was that all the unbaptized were literally and inevitably damned. Yet such an interpretation was never formally declared by the Church to be the only one, and in our present days universal consent declares it to be actually false; yet who can doubt that in a less subtle age such a popular interpretation was the only safeguard for the truth that the Church is God's instrument of salvation, and that he that rejects the Church rejects God.

Tradition, then, is not a fluctuating body of opinion; it is a fixed standard. It is, we may say, not only the dogmatic interpretation of Scripture—that is no more than an unimportant aspect of it—but a positive body of truth contained in itself. It is, in a sentence, the entire revelation of Christianity—it is the whole message committed to the Church by our Lord, while Scripture is but a collection of inspired books, certainly of a peculiar and an unique character, but whose only guarantee is, indeed, tradition. Scripture is a part of tradition rather than tradition an appendix to Scripture. There is, as Mr. Mallock remarks somewhere, a continuous consciousness in the Church. She does not consist of a series of generations, sharply divided by



centuries or movements, but she is a kind of person, as I have said, who lives continuously through centuries and movements, remembering the revelation once made to her, and incessantly stating and restating it. Tradition, then, roughly speaking, is her memory of that revelation and of the events that heralded and followed it, and of the deductions drawn from it. Scripture is of course, as St. Vincent says, "adequate to the full for all its purposes," *i.e.*, as a record of the events and general outline of considerations of their meaning; it is, as I have said, quite unique and precious to the Church beyond all other writings; yet strictly considered it is no more than an accurate history, though inspired by God, in the hands of its human scribe. Tradition, then, in one sense consists of traditions, definite doctrines handed down.—Such doctrines as that the saints are in glory before the resurrection, that they can hear in some manner the prayers of those that address them—these are truths that cannot in any real sense be proved from Scripture, though they may be found there by those who already believe them; rather they are part of that revelation which our Lord committed to His Church at any rate in germinal form. Yet tradition itself in a more real sense is a continuous memory of the whole Gospel. Tradition transcends traditions, as education transcends lessons, as a musician's knowledge of music transcends the sum of the pieces which he composes and performs.

## II

Having so far cleared the ground, we proceed now to a direct consideration of our subject, *viz.*, the relations of Infallibility and Tradition, and in order to understand these relations it is necessary first to glance at what we may call the history of Infallibility.

1. We are all agreed, I suppose, that "Infallibility," more or less in the sense in which I have



described it, as being the result of the intimate bond between the mind of Christ and the mind of the Church on its human side, had its birth in certain words of our Lord, as when He said that the Spirit of Truth should guide His Church into all truth, that the gates of hell should not prevail, and that He Himself would be with His disciples always.

Now the infancy of that doctrine may be said to lie in those first ages when the Church acted upon those words rather than defined them further. There is, in the decrees of all early Councils, an assurance and a positiveness that cannot be explained on any other hypothesis than that the Church was at least sub-consciously conscious of her own prerogative; the tone of early decrees, the sublime confidence of the creeds, the anathemas attached to them—these are a far surer indication of what she felt than any mere words could be. So, for example, the Council of Nicæa states that “the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes those who say that there was a time when Christ was not” (*Sym. Nicæn*). So the Council of Chalcedon states that “it is lawful for nobody to put forward, or to write, or to compile, or to think, or to teach” anything other than what has been defined on the subjects in question (*Def. Fid. apud Concil. Chalc.*). There is not the slightest faltering, or loophole for agnosticism on any of such points; the Council speaks as one having authority, not as the scribes. There is no reference to the variety of Eastern and Western temperaments, or any hint at “aspects of truth.” Even the rebellion of heretics against the Church bears witness to her claim, for they protest not so much against the authority of the Church as against the authority of this or that particular Council to represent her.

Further, there is not the slightest doubt that the nucleus of the Church lay, at least in some degree, at Rome. “It can . . . be proved,” writes Harnack,



"that it was in the Roman Church, which up to about the year 190 was closely connected with that of Asia Minor, that all the elements on which Catholicism is based, first assumed a definite form." And again, "All these causes combined to convert the Christian communities into a real confederation under the primacy of the Roman Church (and subsequently under the leadership of her bishops)" (*Hist. of Dogma*, pp. 151, 160). And again in his *Expansion of Christianity* (vol. i. pp. 464-5): "Down to the age of Constantine, or, at any rate, till the middle of the 3rd century, the centripetal forces in early Christianity were, as a matter of fact, more powerful than the centrifugal. And Rome was the centre of the former tendencies. The Roman Church was the Catholic Church. It was more than the mere symbol and representative of Christian unity, for to it, more than to any other, Christians owed unity itself."

So then, as time goes on, we see with increasing clearness that this nucleus, of which Harnack speaks, appears to solidify swiftly and strongly. Thus, even in the 2nd century, there came to Rome to seek recognition Valentinus from Egypt, Cerdo and Marcion and Praxeas from Asia Minor, Theodotus and Artemon from Byzantium, Sabellius from Libya, and many others. So, too, in the 4th century, we have on St. Ambrose's authority (*De Exc. Sat.* i. 47) that St. Satyrus, his brother, being shipwrecked, "asked [the bishop] whether he were in agreement with the Catholic bishop—that is, with the Roman Church." So, too, St. Jerome writes of Rufinus, "What does he call his faith? That which the Roman Church possesses or that which is contained in the volumes of Origen? If he answers 'The Roman,' it follows that he and they are Catholics." And of course St. Augustine is full of remarks to the same effect (*Ep.* liii. p. 1, &c.).

2. We next notice that this swift localisation takes place at a centre which has other claims to veneration



far in excess of any except that of Jerusalem itself. The two apostolic figures which stand out through the first century of ecclesiastical history as dominant and significant, not only identify themselves with that place, but shed their blood there. They are the only two apostles mentioned even by name by the three great apostolic Fathers, Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp; and further, one of these figures is claimed at an early date to give the sanction of his authority to those who occupy his See. Here again, by what is far more significant than express definition (that is by simple assumption), we see the successor of St. Peter claiming a right to speak, in an extraordinary degree. Of St. Clement's Epistle to the Corinthians, which was read aloud for a while in the Corinthian churches every Sunday, Bishop Lightfoot remarks that it was "the first step towards papal aggression"; and it is impossible indeed to read that epistle without seeing in it a very marked reflection of that supreme confidence and assurance which marks on the one side the apostolical writings of the New Testament, and on the other those of the Bishops of Rome in days when their authority was unquestioned. "If any one should disobey the things spoken by Him through us," writes Clement, "let them know that they will involve themselves in no light transgression and danger" (chap. lix.). And so, from time to time, up to the days of Leo the Great, we have instance after instance, not only of such actions on the part of the Bishops of Rome, but of statements and acts on the part of saints and Councils implying this "more powerful headship" of which Irenæus speaks.

Now I am not, so far, in any way claiming that to the Bishop of Rome during these first centuries there was explicitly ascribed that infallibility which was only defined comparatively recently to be a truth revealed by God. Yet that a supreme authority was believed by Leo to be inherent in his See is surely beyond question.



Thus he writes : "The first of all the Sees . . . the Head . . . that which the Lord appointed to preside over the rest" (Ep. cxxx.). "The care of the universal Church should converge to the one See of Peter, and no part anywhere be at variance with the head" (Ep. xiv.).

And that his claim was acknowledged, at least with sufficient clearness for this argument, is shown by Chalcedon's words in the deposition of Dioscorus :

"Wherefore the most holy and blessed archbishop of great and elder Rome, Leo, by us and by the present holy synod, together with the thrice blessed and glorious Peter the apostle, who is the rock and base of the Catholic Church, and the foundation of the orthodox faith, has stripped Dioscorus of the episcopal dignity."

It is surely incredible that such words should be spoken on both sides with such deliberation on such an occasion, were there not present to the consciousness of the speakers a tradition of far more weight and significance than that which earlier documents have actually preserved.

Now, looking upon this question from the point of view of development, is not this process with its consummation exactly in accord with the rest of ecclesiastical history? We began by considering that the phrase, "The Body of Christ," as applied to the Church, is meaningless unless we attach to it some real idea of development. By development we said that there was involved a Divine subconsciousness which we called the Mind of Christ, and a human explicit consciousness whose work it is to realize and express the contents of the original revelation; further, we saw that if the word "Infallibility," as applied to the Church in general, means anything, it must mean that between the mind of Christ and the mind of the Church there must be such a connection that the latter cannot falsify the former. Further, again we saw that



the fact that a law, in the constitution of an organic being, is not recognized by the explicit consciousness is no argument against its truth. It must be tested by its results, its power to account for phenomena, and its reasonableness.

Now, if we apply these considerations to any doctrine held by all who claim to be called Catholics—*e.g.*, the Real Presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, the Sinlessness of our Lady—we see precisely the same phenomena as those which I have attempted to trace in that of Infallibility. First it is acted upon by the Church in general—the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are worshipped, our Lady is represented as the pure Virgin. Later, these truths are defined. So with this other doctrine during this period which I have called the Infancy of Infallibility, first the Church herself in her Councils assumed a tone of complete and final authority, claiming to speak with the power of God, next the nucleus of the Church's life lay at Rome, and lastly the Bishop of the Church in that place used to a remarkable and singular degree the tone of assurance which the Councils also used. We may say, I think, that the infallibility of the Church and the authority of the Roman Pontiff must be assumed to have been present, at least to the subconscious mind of Christendom. Personally, I think that much more than this might be said, and far more stress laid upon the position of the Roman Pontiff in the first two or three centuries; but even this under-statement, it seems to me, contains all that is necessary for the argument.

3. It is unnecessary to trace the growth of these two ideas through the ages that have succeeded, for it is allowed on all sides that it took place, and that by the 5th century at latest the Bishop of Rome spoke with at least that silent assumption of infallibility which was characteristic of the Councils in the earlier ages of



Christianity. He claims repeatedly, and that without protest except from the East, to rule the Church with the authority of Peter. (Of that protest from the East I shall say a word presently.) To deny to the whole doctrine of Infallibility, which, in the only body of professing Christians where it has unmistakably developed, has reached maturity in the form of the Vatican decree—to deny to this doctrine a place in the Gospel because it was not always explicit, because it was not always simply appealed to, because saints and doctors have apparently used phrases and committed acts in contradiction to it—to dismiss it for these reasons as patently absurd, must mean to dismiss also the sinlessness of our Lady, Apostolic succession, the Athanasian doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, and the mediæval doctrine of the Sacrament of the altar. For after all great saints may be quoted as being at least obscure on the points. St. Cyril compares the consecration of the Bread and Wine to the consecration of the holy oils—a parallel which no theologian of our own days would venture upon; St. Basil in one treatise refrains from calling the Holy Ghost divine, and Lactantius is notoriously doubtful on the same subject. St. Chrysostom accuses Mary of pride and self-assertion. They say these things, they are not excommunicated; and slowly the growth goes forward up to definition.

Is not this a precise parallel to the subject we are considering? St. Cyprian defies Pope Stephen, yet he is acclaimed as saint, though certainly condemned for his action by St. Augustine, St. Jerome, and St. Vincent of Lerins; St. Gregory repudiates the title of œcumenical bishop, yet in another sense it might be used as a summary of Pius X's claims.

Neither is it necessary to speak on this occasion of the revolt of the 16th century; for it is acknowledged, I suppose, by all who claim to be Catholics in any sense, that the controversies of that age



are not a hopeful ground for the discussion of vital truths. There were more things denied than the authority of the Roman Pontiff! We pass straight on, as a matter of undeniable history, to the fact that towards the close of the 19th century the Infallibility of the Roman Pontiff was declared and accepted as true by the greater part of those who are called Christians.

Now it is remarkable that this theory

1. Is held in its explicitness only by that communion of Christians which in the earliest ages of the Church was identified with the nucleus of Christendom. The two facts are undeniable. It was to Rome that men looked from the 1st century onwards; it was from Rome that the decree of Papal Infallibility was issued in the 19th.

2. It is equally remarkable that Rome yields to no portion of Christendom in respect for tradition; in fact, she is accused by many of her opponents, who agree with her in most of her doctrines, of making too much of it.

Now we have seen tradition to be a fixed body of truth, not merely a floating atmosphere of opinion, still less an unwritten secret in the possession of the authorities. It is a verifiable thing, scattered in the writings of saints, focussed in œcumenical decrees as well as preserved continuously in the continuous consciousness of the Church. Surely, then, it is unjust to see in it an accomplice in the accretions of falsehood. So far from being an accomplice, it is a check possessed by no body which professes Scripture only to be the fount of truth. It is as if a king handed to a viceroy not only the laws of England, but a series of verbal instructions which were immediately incorporated into a second book, in which broad margins were left for annotation. This second book would tend to narrow rather than to widen the possible interpretations of the legal code. It would



tend to make impossible any fantastic developments or deductions from the written law. If the tradition of the first four centuries resembled at all the doctrine that all bishops are substantially equal, how is it credible that Leo could have written such things as he did, and still more that Chalcedon should have received them as history relates?

Here, then, we are faced with the fact that that Church which, above all, reverences tradition as well as Scripture—a Church, too, with peculiar access to such tradition—has, as a process of simple history, passed onwards through twenty centuries from a tone of infallibility in her early utterances and a tone of authority in those of her head to an explicit statement of the infallibility of both herself and her head. Is it possible for those of us who attach any meaning to the image of a body as applied to the Church of Christ, who accept as revealed facts such doctrines as those of the Real Presence and the Sinlessness of Mary, or even the Blessed Trinity itself, to deny to the doctrine of Papal Infallibility at least a very reverent consideration?

### III

To return once more to our main point, which is, in a few words, the relation between the possession of Infallibility on the part of the Church and her Pontiff and the apparent ignorance of the prerogative in certain ages of the Church (although, as I have attempted to show, there is a sufficient number of indications that the ignorance was not more than a certain and occasional lack of explicit recognition)—we next demand whether there is any analogy to the situation in other branches of organic life. Is it not that the whole theory is merely an unique theory, extremely convenient and utterly without parallel? I think not.

Although I am aware that analogies prove nothing, yet they certainly and rightly dispose us to believe. An



event or a doctrine without an analogy requires far more proof than one which can be paralleled. For this reason it is that the Incarnation is on all points the fundamental doctrine of Christianity. Certainly it is an unique event, utterly without analogy elsewhere, except in a very minute and shadowy manner. Yet if we once by faith accept it, the doctrine of the Real Presence becomes almost inevitably credible, since it is, in so many senses, but a prolongation of the process. The Incarnation is the analogy of the Blessed Sacrament, not *vice versâ*. We believe the second because we believe the first. We need, therefore, as a parallel to the position of infallibility in the scheme of the Church, a mind, an object, and a relation between them—corresponding to the explicit consciousness of the Church, the depositum and Infallibility ; and, in order that the analogy may be complete, the relation in our analogy must be identical with the relation in that of which it is an analogy.

Now this, I think, is found in the instance of the exact sciences.

Strictly speaking, as Mr. Illingworth points out, the subject-matter of the exact sciences has no concrete existence ; it consists of abstractions formed by the mind. There is no such thing as *two* in the objective world : there are only two horses or two apples. Strictly speaking, again, there is no such thing as a line, or a point, or a circle.

Since, therefore, the sciences of arithmetic and geometry are abstractions formulated by mind, they are the one and only subject in which pure mind is infallible. Mind is literally infallible in arithmetic—individual minds may make mistakes, as every school-boy is aware—but this is only because other considerations, emotions, or distractions enter into the calculation. Pure mind, abstracted from all else, is incapable of error in these matters. Not only has mind never made a mistake, but it is incapable of



doing so—no discovery of any nature whatever could conceivably make  $2 + 2 =$  anything but 4, although it is perfectly true that two things added to two things may very often make 5 or 3 !

(Further, we may also say, parenthetically, that every faculty that is to survive must be infallible towards its proper object: the eye, regarded in general, must be infallible towards light, the ear towards vibrations of sound. If it were not so, eyes and ears would long ago have ceased to exist.)

Now, even if we may demur from this parenthesis, we cannot, I think, object to the analogy of pure mind and the exact sciences. Here we have a mind, an object, and a relation between them of infallibility.

Yet it is quite impossible to say that human consciousness, as a whole, has ever formulated to itself this immense prerogative. It is true that man has acted upon it, that individual mathematicians have stated it, yet I doubt very much whether it is possible to say that there is a popular impression abroad that mathematicians in the bulk are infallible in their science. Men will rely upon them, it is true, risk their fortunes upon them; but unless they happen to have had the matter laid before them dogmatically, they will always shrink from declaring the infallibility of mind in any matter whatever. Yet it is a fact.

Then have we not here an analogy that is something other than fantastic ?

Roughly speaking, the object towards which Infallibility is directed is the Christian revelation of God. This, it is true, is at least as complicated as all other sciences added together, for it concerns the whole of man, body, soul, and spirit; not, indeed, necessarily in all details—for our Lord did not come to reveal to us dates or topography—but, in brief, all that concerns man's moral action towards God and God's revelation of Himself to man—in other words, faith and morals.

But if the object is stupendous, the mind, of which it



is the object, is equally stupendous, for it is no less than the moral consciousness of the entire human race. While it is true that the object once for all revealed is a fixed quantity in itself, its full apprehension cannot be attained until every type of mind has been brought to bear upon it. It is a gospel for every creature ; the Kingdom of God is the sum of, as well as transcendent of, the kingdoms of this world. Philosophies, temperaments, individual experiences, scientific discoveries, even the arts themselves—all these have their function, as century follows century, not only of adorning, but actually of developing and helping towards expression the spirit and truth of Christianity.

On first principles, therefore, we should surely expect that the relation between the quasi-Divine mind and the vitally essential object should be as infallible as that between mind and the exact sciences ; and, as if to reassure us that this infallibility should not be wanting to the nucleus of those who, in every age of Christianity, are the representatives of the human race, to reassure us that the defection or ignorance of many should not frustrate God's purposes, our Lord declares that He Himself will be with those that submit to Him, and that the Spirit of Truth shall guide them into all truth. What else is the meaning of His declaration that "the gates of hell shall not prevail" ?

Further, then, to examine our analogy once more, we see that although the prerogative has been there from the beginning, and, although it has always been acted upon, it has not always been explicitly recognized. Theologians have recognized it, the layman has relied upon it ; but it is not until attention has been drawn to it that a formulated statement of the fact has been made.

#### CONCLUSION.

When, therefore, once more we survey Christendom in general we see that in one communion, and one com-



munion only, has this process of gradual and explicit recognition gone forward, ending in the perfectly inevitable Vatican decree. There never was a time when there was not schism from the body ; heresy sprang into being practically simultaneously with revelation, and the fact that a large part of the East separated from Rome at a comparatively early date, and that a part of the North followed its example later, affects the question no more than the defection of Hymenæus. For if we would identify the mystical Body of Christ, we must look surely among the claimants for that which displays a gradual and increasing recognition of the laws of its own life, for that which passes, by successive movements of self-consciousness, from infancy to maturity. Tested by this essential characteristic of organic life, the theory of the infallibility of all those bodies that claim to have retained episcopal succession acting together surely fails ; for it is impossible to say that the Church, so interpreted, is more conscious of her infallibility now than at Nicæa or Constantinople. And further, even granting the possibility of this theory, we are faced with the fact that the externally divided communions, for whose common faith this infallibility is claimed, severally deny it—Rome denies it, the East denies it, and Canterbury at least falters. Is it more credible that the theory should be true of the whole, in spite of these explicit denials from its parts, than that Rome's theory should be true, which has never yet, except on the part of individuals, been denied by those for whom it is claimed ? If, in answer to this, the phenomena of Gallicanism are urged, I would point out first that all Gallican movements were regarded as novelties, or, at the best, as ancient truths which had vanished for centuries—a claim which is made, more or less, by all heresies ; secondly, that Gallicanism, except as a vague and diminishing temper of mind, has now, as a matter of fact, ceased to exist ; and thirdly, that Gallicanism is,



roughly speaking, a denial of at any rate perfect Catholicism, in the sense in which St. Paul speaks of it as being the breaking down of national barriers. Certainly Gallicanism of a kind has its precursors in early Christian history. It is the direct descendant of those old attempts on the part of such emperors as Constantius, Theodosius II, Zeno, Anastasius, and Justinian to break the unity of the Catholic Church by breaking the connection with Rome. The initiative in the Eastern resistance from time to time seems nearly always to have been the act of the secular power.

But if, in spite of all this, the "diffusive theory" of infallibility is actually true, then indeed we have a life utterly without analogy in the whole realm of creation—a life that lacks an analogy because it is so utterly inferior to all other lives. While the child grows from infancy to maturity, learning gradually his capacities and his limitations; while the tree exercises what is practically infallibility in the choice of chemicals suitable for its development; while the mind of man in general has learned through centuries ever more and more clearly in what realms it is authoritative, in what infallible, and in what empirical; it has been reserved for the mind of Christ's Mystical Body to pass from coherence to incoherence, and her voice from speech to silence.

Nor is the Eastern theory any more comprehensible, since it is no more than a theory. It has not issued in action, for who is there in the West except those who have made a special study of the question that is even aware of what that theory is? The East, as has been excellently remarked, "tried only to be called Catholic, not to be so." Even the theory, too, so far as I have been able to understand it, is not one of development at all. While Eastern theologians cling indeed to tradition, it is a tradition which is a fetter rather than a support. It does not blossom in Council after Council; it bids its adherents hold fast to the old ways,



across which it builds walls for fear that its followers should go too far.

This, then, if I may recapitulate in a few sentences, is the key which appears, like none other, to fit the wards of history.

The Church, we are all agreed, is the Body of Christ; it is that collection of human beings and minds—individual cells which pass away and are renewed—which, by virtue of grace, is lifted into a transcendent personality which our Lord declares to be His own. Yet the human mind of the Church remains human, and it is in a quasi-sacramental manner that the Divine mind is united with it. This union is of such a nature that the human mind of the Church is safeguarded from committing itself to error, while it is yet necessary, from its very humanity and finiteness, that it should struggle ever towards a complete realisation of the contents of that Divine mind to which it is united.

We saw, then, in passing, that the nature of this bond, even though it is an essential and vital bond, need not, at any rate in the early stages of the body's activity, be explicitly recognized and defined by that body—even although, as history and common-sense alike show, it is acted upon.

We, then, looking at history further, saw that the nucleus of Christendom undoubtedly, even in the earliest ages of the Church, formed itself at Rome; and that it was at Rome also that the final explicit definition of the manner in which infallibility is exercised was declared. History showed to us exactly that which we should expect from an organic life—a gradual approximation towards a full understanding of itself.

Further, again, we considered the place of Tradition in the Church's life—that it is a check upon accretions rather than an accomplice with them; and that that same strand in the life of Christendom that showed the gradual development of which I have spoken, showed



also a fidelity towards and a jealousy for tradition, unequalled elsewhere.

We then considered, in general, the nature of infallibility as a prerogative of the Church as a whole, and saw that it was essential to the Church's survival as well as indicated—to use a mild word—by the very words of Christ; and that it was not an unique prerogative, since it is the prerogative of all mind towards its proper object.

And finally, we saw how in that same Communion where a development of consciousness has been so evident, and where tradition has ever been reckoned as a fount of truth, a decree at last issued with the full weight of that Church's authority, defining not a new prerogative at all, but simply the limits and exercise of the old prerogative which, century by century, had become ever more and more explicit. The infallibility of the Pope and the infallibility of the Church are not two powers, but one. Although theoretically the Vicar of Christ is infallible alone, even though he is not the explicitly designated interpreter of the Church, yet practically he never can so act; and even should he do so it is in virtue of his relation towards the mind of Christ, which relation, with regard to the human mind of the Church, is the cause also of its infallibility as well.

Then, once more glancing at the course of history, I attempted to indicate how two other theories of the Church's unity—and those the only serious ones in existence—could only succeed in evacuating the phrase, the "Body of Christ," of all meaning. On one of those theories we find ourselves confronting a lifeless statue; on the other we see that which God endowed with supernatural life, not even fulfilling the ordinary processes of natural experience; the history of the Church, against which the gates of hell should not prevail, becomes one of retrogression and increasing perplexity.



# THE DEATH-BEDS OF "BLOODY MARY" AND "GOOD QUEEN BESS"

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BY ROBERT HUGH BENSON, M.A.

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"'BLOODY MARY,' a sour, bigoted, heartless, superstitious woman, reigned five years, and failed in everything which she attempted. She burned in Smithfield hundreds of sincere godly persons; she went down to her grave, hated by her husband, despised by her servants, loathed by her people, and condemned by God. 'Good Queen Bess' followed her, a generous, stout-hearted, strong-minded woman, characteristically English; and reigned forty-five years. Under her wise and beneficent rule her people prospered; she was tolerant in religion and severe only to traitors; she went down to her grave after a reign of unparalleled magnificence and success, a virgin queen, secure in the loyalty of her subjects, loved by her friends, in favour with God and man."

So we can imagine some modern Englishman summing up the reigns of these two half-sisters who ruled England successively in the sixteenth century—an Englishman better acquainted with history-books than with history, and in love with ideas rather than facts.



It is interesting, therefore, to pursue our investigations a little further, and to learn in what spirit each of these two queens met her end, what was the account given by those about them, what were the small incidents, comments, and ideas that surrounded the moments which for each of them were the most significant of their lives. Death, after all, reveals what life cannot; for at death we take not only a review of our past, but a look into the future, and the temper of mind with which we regard eternity is of considerable importance as illustrating our view of the past. At death too, if at any time, we see ourselves as we are, and display our true characters. There is no use in keeping up a pose any longer. We drop the mask, and show our real faces.

We should expect, then, if we took the view of the ordinary Englishman, that Mary Tudor would die a prey to superstition and terror; the memory of her past and the prospect of her future would surely display her as overwhelmed with gloom and remorse, terrified at the thought of meeting God, a piteous spectacle of one who had ruled by fear and was now ruled by it. Elizabeth, on the other hand, dying full of honour and years, would present an edifying spectacle of a true Christian who could look back upon a brilliant and successful past, a reign of peace and clemency, of a life unspotted with superstition and unblameable in its religion; and, forward to the reward of her labours and the enjoyment of heaven. There will be no mummerly or darkness round her bed, as round her sister's.

Let us turn then to history and see how far our expectations are justified by it.

Our first extract will be from Clifford's *Life of Jane Dormer*. This lady was one of Mary's greatest friends, a woman of extreme simplicity



and beauty of character, who, after refusing many other offers, finally married the Duke de Feria, after her mistress' death. She was in Mary's service during all the years of her reign, and was actually with her when she died.

### **The Death-bed of "Bloody Mary."**

"When it chanced that Jane was not well, as that she could not well attend upon the Queen, it is strange, the care and regard her Majesty had of her, more like a mother or sister, than her Queen and mistress. As in the last days of this blessed Queen, she being at Hampton Court and to remove to London, Jane having some indisposition, her Majesty would not suffer her to go in the barge by water, but sent her by land, in her own litter, and her physician to attend her. And, being come to London, the first that she asked for was Jane Dormer, who met her at the stairfoot and told her that she was reasonably well.

"The Queen answered, 'So am not I,'—being about the end of August, 1558. So took her chamber and never came abroad again. . . .

"It pleased Almighty God that this sickness was her last, increasing daily, until it brought her to a better life. . . . Her sickness was such as made the whole realm to mourn, yet passed by her with most Christian patience. She comforted those of them that grieved about her, she told them what good dreams she had, seeing many little children, like angels, play before her, singing pleasing notes, giving her more than earthly comfort, and thus persuaded all ever to have the holy fear of God before their eyes, which would free them from all evil, and be a curb to all temptations. She asked them to think that whatsoever came to them was by God's permission, and



ever to have confidence that He would in mercy turn all to the best."

[*Life of Jane Dormer* ; sometime Lady-in-Waiting to the Queen, afterwards Duchess of Feria ; by Clifford, quoted by Miss Stone.]

Cardinal Pole, who was ill at the same time as the Queen, and who died a few hours after her, thus writes to Philip a few days before her death :

"During her malady, the Queen did not fail to take the greatest care of herself, following the advice of her physicians" (quoted by Miss Stone) ; and Monsignor Priuli, the Cardinal's friend and secretary, thus writes of the illness and death of them both :—

"During their illness they confessed themselves repeatedly, and communicated most devoutly, and, two days before their end, they each received Extreme Unction ; after which it seemed as if they rallied, and were much comforted, according to the fruit of that holy medicine."

One of the things about which Mary was most anxious, was the future of England. It must be remembered that, at that time in English history, a sovereign had a great deal of influence in the appointment of a successor. Perhaps it is not possible to say that Mary could have prevented Elizabeth's succession, but, if she had been the spiteful and revengeful woman that her enemies suppose, she could at least have given Elizabeth a great deal of trouble, by bequeathing the crown to her husband or to some other Catholic claimant. But she was simple enough to trust Elizabeth's word, and to believe that when that lady promised solemnly to preserve the Catholic faith, she meant what she said. After all, Elizabeth had been regular in hearing two Masses a day for at least a year or two ; she had protested her orthodoxy



even with tears, again and again, and Mary preferred to trust her sister, and to bequeath the crown to her, rather than to treat her as one in whom it was impossible to put any confidence. Here is Clifford's account of the matter:—

"Queen Mary in her last sickness sent Commissioners to examine her [Elizabeth] about religion, to whom she answered, 'Is it not possible that the Queen will be persuaded I am a Catholic, having so often protested it?' and thereupon did swear and vow that she was a Catholic. This is . . . confirmed by the Duke of Feria's letter to the King, who in this sickness of the Queen visited the Lady Elizabeth. He certified him that she did profess the Catholic Religion, and believed the Real Presence, and was not like to make any alteration for the principal points of religion."

[*Life of Jane Dormer*, quoted by Miss Stone.]

Elizabeth, as we know now, kept her word just long enough to secure her succession; she was crowned with Catholic rites by a Catholic bishop, and then immediately set to work to break her promise. She began by striking at the very heart of the Religion she had sworn to preserve, by her action in forbidding the Elevation of the Host at Mass, and so proceeded to re-establish the "Reformation principles" which she had explicitly abjured. Here is the account which Mr. David Morris, B.A., an historian of strong Protestant views, gives of her energy:—

"Thus the Reformation was again the law of England, and the work of Pole and Mary faded away. 'The nuns and monks were scattered once more, the crucifixes came down from the rood-lofts, the Maries and Johns from their niches, and in Smithfield Market, at the cross-ways and street-corners, blazed into bonfires, as in the old



days of Cromwell.' . . . These changes were not carried out without much opposition. . . . All the bishops, excepting the Bishop of Llandaff, refused the oath of supremacy, and were consequently deprived of their sees."

It was in this manner that Elizabeth observed her promise made to her sister. However, this is by the way; we must return to our subject.

Of the final scene of Mary's life we have a tolerably detailed account, taken down from the relation of Jane Dormer herself, who was one of the few friends who remained with Mary to the end. Most of her other attendants had already made their way to Hatfield, to pay their court to the Princess who would presently be in power. This account is an interesting comment on the way in which Mary's religion was a support to her in the crisis, and forms an agreeable comparison with the same element in her sister's death nearly fifty years later. Of course Mary's devotion in no way proves the truth of her faith; it is only an evidence of her absolute and serene sincerity.

"That morning hearing Mass, which was celebrated in her chamber, she being at the last point (for no day passed in her life that she heard not Mass), and although sick to death, she heard it with good attention, zeal, and devotion, as she answered in every part with him who served the Priest, such yet was the quickness of her senses and memory. And when the priest came to that part to say, '*Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi*,' she answered plainly and distinctly to every one, '*Miserere nobis, Miserere nobis, Dona nobis pacem*,'"

"Afterwards, seeming to meditate something with herself, when the Priest took the Sacred Host to consume it, she adored it with her voice



and countenance, presently closed her eyes and rendered her blessed soul to God. This the Duchess [Jane Dormer] hath related to me, the tears pouring from her eyes, that the last thing which the Queen saw in this world was her Saviour and Redeemer in the Sacramental Species, no doubt to behold Him presently after in His glorious Body in heaven. A blessed and glorious passage, '*Anima mea cum anima ejus.*'"

[From *Life of Jane Dormer*, quoted by Miss Stone.]

Mary thought it her duty also, in common with most Christian people, to make some provision for the disposal of her body and her goods after her death—again offering a comparison with Elizabeth's action. She had already impoverished herself with efforts to restore to the service of God what her father had taken "to his own use"; and on her death-bed she made further dispositions in the same direction. In her will and codicil, every page of which she signed painfully with her own hand, she bequeaths her soul to the mercy of Almighty God, and to the "good prayers and help of the most pure and blessed Virgin St. Mary, and of all the Holy Company of heaven"; and her body to be buried at the discretion of her executors. She leaves large sums to the poor, to the Religious Houses which she had re-founded, to the poor scholars at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and to Hospitals, especially to one for disabled soldiers; she also leaves legacies to her ladies and her servants, as well as to her husband and executors. This will was entirely disregarded by Elizabeth, and lay, as Miss Stone remarks, in obscurity for over three hundred years.

So far, then, we are agreeably surprised. There is no terror of the future, or agonised remorse;



there is repentance, of course, and confession of sin and shortcomings, but that is scarcely to Mary's reproach. There is tranquil confidence in religion and the mercy of God; she encourages her friends, makes her will, trusts her sister, and gives up her soul during what was to her, throughout her life, the most sacred and holy action of the day. Whether or not her religion was true, is not our affair now; we are only concerned with the way in which it was her support during her last moments, and even if we are not satisfied as to its objective truth, we can at least be satisfied with its power to uphold one who believed in it with all her heart. In this sense, if in no other, we can say, with Jane Dormer, "A blessed and glorious passage! May my soul be with hers!"

We turn now to

### **The Death-bed of "Good Queen Bess";**

and, if we happen to be of the religion of that lady, and an admirer of her character and achievements, we shall expect to find her last moments marked with the same kind of incidents and aspirations as those of her superstitious sister. If a false religion can give peace and serenity, a true religion can do no less; in fact we might reasonably expect it to do a good deal more, considering the conspicuous advantages that it gave to Elizabeth, at any rate from a worldly point of view. We should expect, also, that a religion which claimed to be an improvement upon Popery should at any rate be free from superstition—at least in the case of such a professor as the common-sense Elizabeth. Whether that was so or not we shall hear from Elizabeth's companions.

We begin with an extract from the account



given by Lady Southwell, one of the women in attendance on her a few weeks before her death:—

"Her Majesty being in very good health one day, Sir John Stanhope, Vice-Chamberlain, . . . came and presented her Majesty with a piece of gold of the bigness of an angel, full of characters, which he said an old woman in Wales had bequeathed to her on her death-bed ; and thereupon he discoursed how the said testatrix, by virtue of the piece of gold, lived to the age of 120 years, and in that age, having all her body withered and consumed, and wanting Nature to nourish her, she died, commanding the said piece of gold to be carefully sent to her Majesty, alleging, further, that as long as she wore it on her body she could not die.

"The Queen in confidence took the said gold and hung it about her neck . . .

"Though she became not suddenly sick, yet she daily decreased of her rest and feeding, and within fifteen days she fell downright ill, and the cause being wondered at by my Lady Scrope, with whom she was very private and confidant, being her near kinswoman, her Majesty told her (commanding her to conceal the same), 'that she saw one night her own body exceedingly lean and fearful in a light of fire.' This vision was at Whitehall, a little before she departed for Richmond, and was testified by another lady, who was one of the nearest about her person, of whom the Queen demanded 'Whether she was not wont to see sights in the night?' telling her of the bright flame she had seen. . . .

"Afterwards, in the melancholy of her sickness, she desired to see a *true* looking-glass, which in twenty years before she had not seen, but only such a one as on purpose was made to deceive



her sight, which true looking-glass being brought her, she presently fell exclaiming at all those flatterers which had so much commended her, and they durst not after come into her presence."

[LADY SOUTHWELL, quoted by Miss Strickland.]

While Mary sees heavenly children playing and singing about her bed, Elizabeth sees her own body exceedingly lean and fearful in a light of fire, and examines her looking-glass to see if she were really as beautiful as her courtiers declared. But to continue; Sir Robert Carey writes:—

"When I came to Court I found the Queen ill-disposed, and she kept her inner lodging; yet she, hearing of my arrival, sent for me. I found her in one of her withdrawing chambers, sitting low upon her cushions. She called me to her, I kissed her hand, and told her it was my chiefest happiness to see her in safety and in health, which I wished might long continue. She took me by the hand and wrung it hard and said, 'No, Robin, I am not well,' and then discoursed with me of her indisposition, and that her heart had been sad and heavy for ten or twelve days, and in her discourse she fetched not so few as forty or fifty great sighs. . . . I used the best words I could to persuade her from this melancholy humour, but I found by her it was too deeply rooted in her heart, and hardly to be removed . . . From that day forwards she grew worse and worse. She remained upon her cushions four days and nights at the least. All about could not persuade her either to take any sustenance or go to bed."

[SIR ROBERT CAREY.]

And again, the French Ambassador writes to his master:—



[March 19.]

"(The) Queen Elizabeth (hath) been very much indisposed for the last fourteen days, having scarcely slept at all during that period, and eaten much less than usual, being seized with such a restlessness that, though she had no decided fever, she felt a great heat in her stomach and a continual thirst, which obliged her every moment to take something to abate it. . . . Some ascribed her disorder to her uneasiness with regard to Lady Arabella Stuart ; others to her having been obliged by her Council to grant a pardon to her Irish rebel, Tyrone. Many were of opinion that her distress of mind was caused by the death of Essex ; but all agreed that before her illness became serious, she discovered an unusual melancholy, both in her countenance and manner. . . ."

[March 22.]

"The Queen of England had been somewhat better the day before, but was that day worse, and so full of chagrin and so weary of life that, notwithstanding all the entreaties of her councillors and physicians for her to take the proper medicine and means necessary for her relief, she refused everything."

[DE BEAUMONT, quoted by Miss S.]

"Bloody Mary," then, lies in bed, hearing Mass each morning, receiving the sacraments with devotion and serenity, looking back indeed on a short life that had apparently failed, but to an eternal future which seemed full of hope : "Good Queen Bess," in the midst of honours and success, after a long and magnificent reign, does not sleep ; she lies on cushions ; it is suggested by her friends that her melancholy may arise from having been



compelled to pardon her enemy ; and there is no word, as yet, of religion. It can scarcely, surely, be the past which she regrets ! Has she not prospered in all to which she has put her hand ? Can it be death, judgement, and eternity of which she is afraid ? And, if so, is it possible that the religion for which she has sacrificed her plighted word, has no comfort for her now ?

Her visions, too ! Her own body, "exceedingly lean and fearful in a light of fire,"—is that a mere superstition with nothing to justify it, or is it something worse ?

Her own kinsman adds another terrible detail or two ; let us hear them in Miss Strickland's words :—

"The [Lord] Admiral [Howard] came and knelt beside her where she sat among her cushions sullen and unresigned ; he kissed her hands, and with tears implored her to take a little nourishment. After much ado he prevailed so far, that she received a little broth from his hands, he feeding her with a spoon. But when he urged her to go to bed, she angrily refused, and then in wild and wandering words hinted of phantasma that had troubled her midnight couch.

" 'If he were in the habit of seeing such things in his bed,' she said, 'as she did when in hers, he would not persuade her to go there' . . .

"When Cecil and his colleagues were gone, the Queen, shaking her head piteously, said to her brave kinsman—

" 'My lord, I am tied with a chain of iron about my neck.' The Lord Admiral reminded her of her wonted courage, but she replied, desponding :

" 'I am tied, I am tied ; and the case is altered with me.' "

[MISS STRICKLAND.]



She was carried to bed soon, but again left it. The French Ambassador continues :—

"The Queen continued to grow worse, and appeared in a manner insensible, not speaking above once in two or three hours, and at last remained silent for four and twenty, holding her finger almost continually in her mouth, with her rayless eyes open and fixed on the ground, where she sat on cushions, without rising or resting herself, and was greatly emaciated by her long watching and fasting. . . . This morning the Queen's Music (*i.e.*, the choir) has gone to her. I believe she means to die as gaily as she has lived. . . ."

[DE BEAUMONT.]

"The Queen hastens to her end, and is given up by all her physicians. They have put her to bed almost by force, after she had sat on cushions for ten days, and has rested barely an hour each day in her clothes."

[DE BEAUMONT.]

About this time Lady Southwell adds a significant story :—

"The two ladies-in-waiting discovered the queen of hearts with a nail of iron knocked through the forehead, and thus fastened to the bottom of her Majesty's chair; they durst not pull it out, remembering that the like thing was used to the old Countess of Sussex, and afterwards proved a witchcraft, for which certain persons were hanged."

[LADY SOUTHWELL, quoted by Miss S.]

Let Miss Strickland continue :—

"Lady Guildford then in waiting on the Queen, and leaving her in an almost breathless sleep in her privy chamber, went out to take a little air,



and met her Majesty, as she thought, three or four chambers off. Alarmed at the thought of being discovered in the act of leaving the royal patient alone, she hurried forward in some trepidation in order to excuse herself, when the apparition vanished away. Lady Guildford returned, terrified, to the chamber; but there lay Queen Elizabeth, still in the same lethargic motionless slumber in which she had left her."

It is really rather appalling,—this atmosphere of superstitious fear that lay round the Queen. Whether Lady Guildford was mistaken, or whether that uneasy spirit in some manner manifested itself in the gloom of the gallery, it is impossible to know. But at least we know the mood in which the Court found itself—this Court which dared not run from this dreadful old woman as its predecessor had run from her sister, to pay homage to the rising sun.

As regards her attitude to her own Church ministers we have the following significant facts. "When she was near her end," writes Miss Strickland, "the Council sent to her the Archbishop of Canterbury and other prelates, at the sight of whom she was much offended, cholerically rating them, 'bidding them be packing,' saying 'she was no atheist, but she knew full well they were but hedge-priests.'"

Did she think then, one wonders, of men who were not "hedge-priests" of her making, but of a Church which claims to rule, not to be ruled by princes: a Church, too, to which she had promised allegiance and with whose rites she had been crowned—men who under her orders had suffered a death, compared with which the "fires of Smithfield" were mercy itself, for no other crime than that of ministering to the souls of men the Word and Sacraments that were still all but universal in



Christendom? Mary had, indeed, burned men for heresy, according to the laws of the realm ; it had been left for tolerant Elizabeth, the champion of Private Judgement, to strip and disembowell living priests and laymen for the crime of allowing their Private Judgement to differ from her own. One cannot help wondering whether she now remembered Campion, Briant, Sherwin, and the rest—and the rack, and the rope, and the butcher's knife, and cauldron ; whether the thought crossed her mind that perhaps such men as these might have had a message to her soul that others could not have.

However, it was too late, and as death became imminent, even "hedge-priests" were better than none at all. At least they might soothe her for a few minutes, even if they could no more.

"About six at night," writes Sir Robert Carey, "she made signs for the Archbishop and her chaplains to come to her. . . . Her Majesty lay upon her back, with one hand in the bed, and the other without. The Bishop kneeled by her and examined her first of her faith, and she so punctually observed all his several questions, by lifting up her eyes and holding up her hand, as it was a comfort to all beholders. Then the good man told her plainly what she was, and what she was to come to ; and though she had been long a great Queen here upon earth, yet shortly she was to yield an account of her stewardship to the King of kings. After this he began to pray, and all that were by did answer him. . . . The Queen made a sign with her hand. My sister Scrope, knowing the meaning, told the Bishop the Queen desired he would pray still. He did so for a long half-hour after, and then thought to leave her. The second time she made sign to have him continue in prayer. He did so for half an hour



more, with earnest cries to God for her soul's health, which he uttered with that fervency of spirit as the Queen to all our sight much rejoiced thereat, and gave testimony to us all of her Christian and comfortable end."

For even such dumb signs as these, interpreted by Carey's charity, I suppose all sincere Christians must be thankful, but they are all the reassurance we can get.

There is no word of repentance or of her desire for God's pardon; there is no suggestion apparently from her or from any other that it would be at least seemly for a dying woman to receive what she would have called "the most comfortable sacrament of Christ's body and blood." No; the "hedge-priests" prayed long and loud by the bed; the Queen made occasional signs for them to continue; and the bystanders rejoiced at such a "Christian and comfortable end." That, then, was what the "Reformed Religion," the "glorious light" of which Henry VIII of matrimonial memory was the dawn and Virgin Elizabeth the full-orbed day—this was all that it could do for her: and, at three o'clock in the morning, "Good Queen Bess" died and appeared before God.

As regards her care for the future and the disposition of her property, we read in *Nichols's Progresses* that "she made no will, neither gave anything away; so that they which come after find a well-furnished jewel-house, and a rich wardrobe of more than 2,000 gowns, with all things else answerable,"—which must have been a great satisfaction to all concerned.

But all this proves nothing?  
Oh, no! it proves nothing!



## “CHRISTIAN SCIENCE”<sup>1</sup>

BY THE REV. ROBERT HUGH BENSON, M.A

It is extremely easy to make fun of “Christian Science.” In fact, if we consider it as it is in itself, or rather as it appears to present itself to the casual observer, it is extremely difficult not to do so. It appears to solve problems by denying that they exist; to remove the toothache by assuring the sufferer that he is under a complete misapprehension, for he has neither a tooth nor an ache; it claims to be an universal religion, and at the same time its professors charge heavy fees for instruction in its tenets; its founder has written a slender but expensive volume with the title *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, and causes this to be bound up to resemble the Bible. In fact, the complete absence of any sense of humour in the presentation of this religion to the world arouses a corresponding counterpoise of laughter in ourselves.

But this is a shallow method of meeting the question. If Christian Science were as ludicrous as it appears—or, rather, if it were nothing more than ludicrous—we should have to relinquish to a large extent our faith in human nature; for it is beyond a doubt that this system is making almost unprecedented strides in the modern

<sup>1</sup> A paper read at the Catholic Conference at Brighton, 1906.



world. Statistics, especially when they come from America, where nothing is ever done except on a gigantic scale, are apt to be misleading, but we are bound to pay some respect to them when they inform us that the recently built "Temple" of the Scientists in Boston cost £400,000; that the organ cost £8,000, and thirty thousand of the denomination attended its opening.

Neither are converts made only among the uneducated. It is true to a large extent, if we may trust our own observation and the tone of the testimonies put forth by its adherents, that Christian Science is chiefly triumphant amongst the partly educated—amongst those who have sufficient learning to be impressed by oracular paradoxes, but not enough to detect their shallowness; but it is also true that very highly educated persons indeed are to be found amongst its supporters, and those, not only educated in irrelevant subjects, but qualified exponents of the very sciences which it claims to supplant. Doctors as well as classical scholars and mathematicians worship at the shrine of Mrs. Mary Baker G. Eddy. Humourists, philosophers, and Christians seem the only persons unrepresented in this body. Lastly, unless we are prepared to doubt the word of obviously sincere persons, and even, in the case of some of us, the evidence of our own senses, we are bound to admit that the practical claims of this religion are to a large extent justified; and that persons who have hitherto spent much money on physicians without amendment of health have been cured by the methods of this curious sect.

Briefly the history of Christian Science is as follows:

It was discovered by Mrs. Eddy in 1866, as a result of her Scriptural researches; she began her propaganda in 1867; her *Science and Health* was published in



1875, and by 1903, 270,000 copies had been sold. In 1879 she organized the "Church of God Scientist in Boston," and in 1881 she was ordained to the ministry and founded the Massachusetts Metaphysical College; in 1883 she founded *The Christian Science Journal*. Since that date the denomination has gradually spread, and in recent years has met with extraordinary success in England as well as in America. There has been more than one formidable secession; but in this paper I propose to deal rather with the original body from which all sprang.

#### ITS TENETS: RELIGIOUS ASPECT.

We must now proceed to an examination of its tenets, and this (as admirably stated by Miss Margaret Benson in a tract published by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge) falls naturally under three heads: the religious, the philosophical, and the physical.

First, then, its religious aspect, and in particular its claim to be considered Christian. The famous essay on "Snakes in Iceland" is irresistibly suggested to the mind. There are no snakes in Iceland; and Christian Science is not Christian; and we shall see presently that it is not scientific either.

It is not Christian, I mean, in the ordinary sense of the word. It is not more Christian, for example, than the religion of Mahomet. Mahomet wrote in the Koran that Mary should "bear the Word proceeding from God," and that "Christ Jesus, the Son of Mary," was "one of those who approach near to the presence of God" (chap. ii.). Such was his mistaken reverence for our Blessed Lord that he stated that "the Jews slew him not . . . but he was represented by one in his likeness" and that "God took him up unto himself" (chap. iv.). Mrs. Eddy, however (who, as we should



expect, affixes no index to her works—there is none at least in my copy of *Science and Health*), is as explicit as her confused mind will allow her to be, that "Jesus is the human man, and Christ the divine ideal" (*S. and H.*, 473), she implies by her silence that the Person of Our Lord was human, not divine; she criticises His institution of the Holy Eucharist (*ibid.* p. 34), calling it His "ritualism or concessions to matter" (p. 33). Yet her connection with Christianity is sufficiently strong to allow of her falling into several heresies condemned and exploded many centuries ago. "God never created matter" (p. 335), we are informed. That is all a mistake; it came into its attenuated shadow of existence through what she calls "mortal mind." "Temporal things," she says, "are the thoughts of mortals and are the unreal, being the opposite of the real or spiritual and eternal" (p. 337). The conclusion of such logic, as Miss Benson points out, is irresistible. East, which is real, has West for its opposite. Therefore West is unreal. Or, even better, my left ear is the opposite of my right; but my right ear exists, therefore my left cannot. I only think that it does. She is a kind of elementary Gnostic, therefore, in her views of matter, and a kind of Docetic in her views of the Incarnate Son of God. She further denies the Atonement, at least in any sense in which that word has ever been understood by Christians. "Does erudite theology," she sarcastically asks, "regard the crucifixion of Jesus as chiefly providing a ready pardon for all sinners who ask for it and are willing to be forgiven? . . . Then we must differ" (p. 24). "Its efficacy," she continues, "lies in the practical affection and goodness it demonstrated for mankind."

One wonders, therefore, with all this, why she pays such deference to the Holy Scriptures at all. But the



difficulty is less great when we consider that, first, she would get no hearing from the ill-educated Protestants who form her sect if she did not ; secondly, that her early Congregational teaching is too strong for her ; and, thirdly and supremely, her method of exegesis. This last point repays deep study. She makes the Scriptures mean exactly what she likes. Contemplate if you please the following passage. It is taken from the 29th division of the tenth chapter of the work on *Science and Health*, beginning at the first verse :—

"The word Adam is from the Hebrew 'Adamah,' signifying the 'red colour of the ground, dust, nothingness.' Divide the name Adam into two syllables, and it reads 'a dam' or obstruction." (One can only be thankful that it means nothing worse.) "This," proceeds the oracle, "suggests the thought of something fluid, of mortal mind in solution : it further suggests the thought of that 'Darkness . . . upon the face of the deep,' when matter or dust was deemed the agent of Deity in creating man—when matter stood opposed to Spirit as that which is accursed. Here 'a dam' is not a mere play upon words, for it means much. It illustrates the separation of man from God, and the obstacle the serpent, sin, would impose between man and his Creator. The dissection and definition of words, aside from their metaphysical meaning, is not scientific" (p. 338) . . . and so and so on.

I beg to assure my hearers that this sublime passage is as I have read it. You will observe that Moses is also set aside in it as a blind guide to mortal minds, and that Mrs. Eddy has penetrated mysteries where the friend of God was at fault. Perhaps the only point in the passage to which one is able to give one's cordial consent is that the word Adam, as interpreted by the American prophetess, does indeed



"suggest the thought of darkness upon the face of the deep."

Or consider this comment upon the ninth verse of the first chapter of Genesis—a verse which would, superficially considered, appear to offer at least some little difficulty to a lady who denies God's creation of matter, the goodness and even the reality of matter itself, and at the same time pledges herself to a belief in the inspiration of the Scriptures. But Mrs. Eddy is undaunted.

"And God called the dry land Earth: and the gathering together of the waters called He seas; and God saw that it was good." Here is the comment:—

"Here the human concept and Divine idea seem confused by the translator, but they are not so in the scientifically Christian meaning of the text. Upon Adam devolves the pleasureable task of finding names for all material things; but Adam has not yet appeared in the narrative. In metaphor, the dry land illustrates the absolute formations instituted by mind, while water symbolizes its elements. Spirit duly feeds every object, as it appears in the line of creation, so that it may express the fatherhood and the motherhood of God. Spirit names and blesses all. Without natures particularly defined all things would be alike, and creation full of nameless children, wanderers from the parent mind, strangers in a tangled wilderness" (p. 506).

This is the whole of the comment; and it, as well as the preceding passage, is an admirable example of Mrs. Eddy's style and methods. Upon myself, who have really attempted to understand what she means, I can only say that the effect has been one resembling that of incipient imbecility. They are certainly English words arranged in tolerably grammatical order; but they produce to my poor intelligence rather less than no meaning



at all. I feel indeed, in her own beautiful expression, a "wanderer from the parent mind, a stranger in a tangled wilderness."

After these examples we are not surprised to learn the following facts.

The river Hiddekel means "Divine Science, understood and acknowledged." "In" (i-n) is "a term obsolete in Science, if used in reference to Spirit or Deity." "Gad" means "Science; spiritual being understood: haste toward harmony." "Assher" means "Hope and Faith; spiritual compensation, the ills of the flesh rebuked." And lastly—and this is a piece of exegesis that seems to me significant—Gihon (a river) means "The rights of woman acknowledged morally, civilly, and socially" (pp. 581-588).

#### NOT TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY.

It would be possible to go on for ever quoting passages of this kind, in illustration of Mrs. Eddy's religious position—I think it is the most confused and intricate that I have ever come across. I picture her seated at her desk with the Bible before her—with what is called the Authorized Version—and a small heap of second-rate Nonconformist commentaries upon the text. ("Adamah, red colour of the ground, dust, nothingness," irresistibly brings back the memory of the Scripture lesson on Monday mornings at my private school.) Seated at her desk, then, absolutely confident that she is inspired from on high, yet dependent for mere technicalities of the etymological meaning of words upon the coarse erudition of dissenting divines, she proceeds to find her system in the Bible. Gad must mean something, therefore why should it not mean science, spiritual being, understood, haste towards harmony? There is no reason why it should not, therefore it does.



There must be something about women's rights ; Gihon seems tolerably unoccupied, therefore Gihon means women's rights. Here is Moses saying that God made mountains and seas and saw that they were good. But God did nothing of the sort : Moses entirely misunderstood the situation, or at any rate his translator did. Therefore this must be set right. And so on.

Now, I sincerely intended when I began this paper to take Mrs. Eddy seriously, but it is simply impossible. In religious matters she resembles a bull—or shall we rather say a well-intentioned cow?—in a china shop. She means ever so well ; she has grasped the outline of the idea that Scripture can be allegorically interpreted, and that there is such a thing as symbolism ; so she proceeds, as it were, to drink out of the spout of a coffee-pot and put a slop-basin upon the top of her head to protect her from the sun. These clay objects, she argues, occasionally resemble other things than those for which they were designed ; a china apple may serve as a pepper-pot ; then why in the world should not a slop-basin serve as a hat ?

Hence follows the scene of confusion and the sound of trampling and breakage, of which I have given you only the minutest glimpse.

#### MRS. EDDY'S PHILOSOPHY.

When we turn to her philosophy, we are not in much better plight ; for the most charitable construction that we can put upon her system is that she provided herself with the smaller edition of a philosophical dictionary, asked her friends the meaning of some words and guessed at the rest.

Briefly stated, her philosophical system, so far as it is coherent at all, is as follows :—

God is mind, and God alone has true existence in the



highest sense. Man also is mind (she is not explicit as to whether man is, therefore, Divine or not ; but we will be charitable and assume that she is not a sheer Pantheist, although this is a hard task when we read that God is "the only Ego"). But we will allow that man has a secondary kind of personality dependent upon God. Very well, then. Since God—or shall we say, "The Divine"—alone is real, all that is opposed to the Divine must be unreal. But the Divine is Spirit, and the opposite of spirit is matter. Therefore matter is unreal. Again, God is good, therefore the opposite of good is not God, therefore it is not real ; therefore evil has no existence.

Here, then, is the philosophy with which Mrs. Eddy sets out to attack the problems of sin and suffering. "There is no sin or suffering" is inscribed upon her banner. She is quite explicit about this. "There is but one primal cause," she says, "therefore there can be no effect from any other cause." (One notes in passing that she is apparently unaware of what are called secondary causes.) ". . . And there can be no reality in aught which proceeds not from this great and only cause." And again, "God does not cause man to sin, to be sick or die." And the conclusion is, as I have said, that sin, sickness, and death have no real existence.

But somehow the world persists in believing in these things ; and this must be accounted for. This, then, is her solution. The mind of man has somehow become rather debased—she does not explain how this is possible, if deterioration from the primal cause is an impossibility—but—well, it is so. This debased perception she calls by the name of "mortal mind," and sickness and death, though not real in themselves, have a kind of phantom life when regarded by mortal mind.



The cure, then, is evident—man must refuse to yield to the allurements of mortal mind ; he must stoutly deny its veracity, and thus gradually the idea of sin and sickness will be eradicated, and with the eradication of the idea such an attenuated existence as they possess will also pass away.

#### ITS FALLACIES.

Now in this summary we have really the pith of Mrs. Eddy's system. First let us expose the fallacies.

Mrs. Eddy does not understand the meaning of existence. She is right, in a hazy kind of way, when she thinks that God alone has existence in the highest sense ; but she is wrong when she thinks, if she does so think, that there is no other kind of existence possible. She ignores the possibility that creation, secondary causes, and man's free-will may be capable of modifying the extension of God's original idea. She is, that is to say, an Idealist in such a sense that she denies any sort of reality to anything except ideas. She does not seem to be aware that matter may be a product of spirit and of a different constitution from spirit without thereby destroying the supremacy of spirit.

She contradicts herself also flatly, as I have already hinted. If nothing can truly exist except that which is in harmony with the creative Spirit, how is it, we ask, that mortal mind exists ? She has no answer to this except that of saying that it doesn't. Yet she bases the existence of the idea of sin and matter upon the fact that it does, and that it is, moreover, extremely energetic. Here again is another contradiction. There can be no effect from any other cause except the Primal Cause, she tells us : yet almost in the next paragraph she tells us that sin and matter, so far as they exist, have come into existence from mortal mind which is certainly anything but a Primal Cause.



It is really useless to go on—it is like arguing with a fog. And her final retort, of course, silences us at once. We ourselves are in a condition of mortal mind, she informs us ; therefore, of course, we cannot understand her. And indeed we cannot.

A TRUE PRINCIPLE AMID CONFUSION.

But is there nothing in her ideas ? No, I think there is a good deal in them. There is that truth in them which the Christian religion has taught for nineteen centuries ; namely that spirit is superior to matter, and the original cause of it, and that under certain circumstances spirit can control matter.

Here is the principle that is true under all her confusion. I say that the Christian religion has taught it for nineteen centuries ; I will go further and say that the mind of man has grasped it since the creation of the world. It is this that underlies every miracle that God has ever wrought ; it is by this that the Saints have lived ; and it is this that modern psychologists are at last beginning to verify by scientific methods. It is the vast and all-dominating principle on which we resist temptation, namely that spiritual interests are better worth securing than carnal ; it is on that principle that the madman can perform feats impossible to the sane, and that the hypnotist can banish a nervous headache, and can, under certain circumstances, modify the ravages of organic disease. But it does not therefore follow that because the master is greater than the servant therefore the servant is a phantom ; nor that there may not be occasions when the weary master can deal with matters better through his servant than himself, as when a doctor gives a chemical drug instead of hypnotism. “All good things are ours,” says Browning, “nor soul helps flesh more now than flesh helps souls.”



This, then, is our answer to Mrs. Eddy : You are right, we say, when you declare that God is a Spirit ; you are wrong when you deny that the Word was made Flesh. You are right in proclaiming the superiority of Mind, you are wrong when you deny the existence of matter. You are right when you say with the Idealists that the qualities of matter have no existence apart from mind ; you are wrong when you deduce from that proposition that if human minds ceased to perceive there is no Divine Mind to save the situation. You are right, then, with nearly every other heretic under the sun in your affirmations ; you are absolutely wrong with absolutely every heretic in your negations.

#### THE PRACTICAL SYSTEM.

We will pass on to the practical system of Christian Science. Now this is chiefly directed to the destruction of such delusions as bodily suffering by a means other than that of medical science. The success of this religion is indeed largely due to its results in this direction ; for there is no question at all that cures are wrought by this extraordinary philosophy. The close, indeed, of Mrs. Eddy's remarkable book consists largely of testimonies to this effect ; and one or two recent trials are evidences to the fact that, even if these cases were a little unfortunate owing to the perversion of mortal mind (which, as we have seen, can have no existence), yet that there are persons of integrity sufficiently satisfied as to Mrs. Eddy's claims to risk and indeed to sacrifice their lives in her cause.

I must confess that the extracts from rejoicing patients, given in her book, seem to me a little unconvincing ; but I am perfectly willing to allow that they are genuine, and that it is only my cold insular nature, coupled with my "mortal mind," that makes me hesitate.



"I wish to say," writes a lady, "to those who think the price of our literature is too high, that if I could not get another copy, there is no price on earth that would induce me to part with my *Science and Health*. Not mentioning the money paid for doctor's bills, I gave for one medical book \$3.50, for another, \$6.75, and after studying these I found I had more diseases than before their purchase."

(This reminds me of Mr. Jerome's experience in similar circumstances; his was even more shocking, for, perhaps you will remember that he discovered that he had every disease enumerated in the book except house-maid's knee.)

"For the small sum of \$3," the lady continues, "I purchased a copy of *Science and Health*, and through reading it understandingly found I had no diseases. It always brings a feeling of pity when I hear any one say our text-book is too costly. Who would not give three dollars to be freed from all diseases? I seemed to have all, or nearly all, the ills that flesh is heir to. I will not try to enumerate them, but one that I was made free from—one that had always been with me—was a pain on the top of my head. . . . The doctors told me that I never would be freed, as my brain was too large for the space allotted to it, and that was what caused the pressure and pain. Soon after reading *Science and Health* I forgot that I had a brain that was too large, for all the pain and pressure was gone. Oh! I can never tell how free I felt, with no pain after so many years of suffering (p. 613).—M. M. S. CLINTON, Iowa."

But this same lady seems to have been but an imperfect disciple, for she informs us also that "from being a shadow of ninety-five pounds, she reached one hundred and sixty-five pounds" from a perusal of the book. Surely she should rather have ceased to weigh any



pounds at all since matter is a delusion! Yet we cannot but rejoice at her liberation even to this extent, for, previously to this, we learn that she was in the habit of taking medicine every fifteen minutes throughout the day.

And this is a tolerably characteristic example of Mrs. Eddy's followers. Honestly, I opened the book at random, when I fell upon this precious passage. Perhaps I was guided to do so. But I do not say they are all of this nature; I am quite willing to allow that even objective diseases may be cured by Mrs. Eddy's system; for the power of self-suggestion is certainly a remarkable fact; and I should hesitate from attempting to limit the effect of a convinced mind acting upon the body. But where I take exception to the system is in the fact that bodily disease seems to be selected alone for treatment from all the manifestations of mortal mind. Food also, according to the new gospel, ought to be a delusion; so is money, so are carriages and horses and trains and steamboats and clothes—for they are all manifestations of a thing which does not exist, since God is Spirit and Spirit is all. Yet I am not aware that Christian Scientists have less than three square meals a day—in fact, I am acquainted with one family belonging to this denomination which joyfully sits down to a late supper of tinned lobster, exclaiming at the liberating doctrine which tells them that there is no such thing as indigestion. Mrs. Eddy herself wears, I believe, a black silk dress; she certainly charges three dollars fifty cents for her miracle-working book, demanding prepayment, and, I rather fancy, a sum of about twenty pounds sterling for a course of higher study; I happen to know that her followers travel by train—and, in fact, lay themselves open generally to the charge of not quite believing what they say.



ITS INCONSISTENCY.

Yet what do they say to this? They say that at present concession must be made to these fantastic ideas, the mortal mind of the rest of the world is still too strong for the elect, and that they must continue to wear their chains a little longer. Mrs. Eddy goes even further, and sadly laments the limiting power of vulgar credulity. “Until the advancing age,” she writes, “admits the efficacy and supremacy of mind, it is better to leave surgery, and the adjustment of broken bones and dislocations to the fingers of a surgeon, while you confine yourselves chiefly to mental reconstruction and the prevention of inflammation.” Another irresistible parallel suggests itself. When David Copperfield, you remember, was giving his little supper, ending as it did in such a lamentable manifestation of mortal mind, under the delusive influence of non-existent alcohol, one by one the preparation of the dishes was consigned to the manipulation of the pastrycook round the corner, thereby allowing Mrs. Cripps, his landlady, to “give her undivided attention to the potatoes” and “to serve up the cheese and the celery as she would wish to see it done.” But a good time is coming, says the prophetess: “The time approaches when mortal mind will forsake its corporeal, structural, and material basis, when immortal mind and its formations will be apprehended in science, and material beliefs will not interfere with spiritual facts.”

Yet, until that time comes, we may surely be pardoned if we continue to see a little inconsistency in all this, and to explain what successes are attained by the system by the principle of self-suggestion rather than by a philosophical fallacy. It might be otherwise if there was any really startling evidence that Christian Scientists believed



what they said. When Mrs. Eddy ascends a pillar like St. Simon Stylites, or confines her diet to pulse and water like the holy children—for even we do not ask that she should subsist entirely on high and noble ideas—when American professors of this creed cross the Atlantic on millstones, or even without them, upborne by their supreme consciousness of the superiority of mind over matter—even, we might almost say, when the preachers of this religion go out barefooted and brown-frocked—for we will grant them that concession to mortal mind for the present—to proclaim the good news of the kingdom to those who cannot afford three dollars fifty cents as the price of their liberation—when we see all this, I say—when we see even one-hundredth part of the self-denial of the meanest among the Christian saints, or the very faintest sign that God is working among them in a manner in which He does not work in hypnotic establishments, perhaps then we shall be able to treat them with more respect and less laughter, and be patient enough to study their complicated books with something resembling sympathy.

#### NEITHER CHRISTIAN NOR SCIENTIFIC.

In conclusion, then, we have seen that Christian Science cannot claim, in any acknowledged sense of those words, to be either Christian or Scientific. It is a digest of an emasculated Protestantism and a misunderstood Idealism manifested in an inconsistent course of life. Yet Mrs. Eddy has one true principle—namely, that mind is master of matter ; and she has proclaimed this principle to an undiscerning and credulous public who had forgotten it, sunk in materialism, or, at the very best, in an utterly conventional and de-spiritualised form of Christianity, in language resembling that of a would-be minor prophet confined in an American asylum



on the charge of thinking himself the Apostle John. To such people as these, accustomed to regard matter as supreme, and religion as a kind of pleasing emotion largely dependent on the state of the liver, her message has come as a revelation ; and for this, I think, we may be thankful. Anything in the world—the creed of the Hottentot or of the Red Indian—I had almost said even spiritualism itself—is better than materialism. It is better to be aware of the spiritual world, seeing it through even Mrs. Eddy's spectacles, than not to be aware of it at all ; and it is something to know that God is Love, even if one forgets that He must also have some attribute corresponding to common sense.

For this, then, we may be thankful, though it is hard to preserve our gratitude when we consider the huge superincumbent weight of dross that lies about the gold ; still more, when we remember the thousands of immortal souls whom God made for Himself, whom He endowed with reason, and whom Mrs. Eddy has succeeded in diverting from the path that leads to Him. But if all roads lead to Rome, at least a great many may lead to God, and it is impossible to say that many Americans, and, indeed, English as well, are not better as cheerful, healthy-bodied, though mind-deluded, "Scientists" than as narcotic, materialistic, hopeless invalids. This is, I am afraid, faint praise, but it is all that I have the heart to utter.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS.

You will forgive me, perhaps, if I end with two or three recommendations to any who have to deal with persons suffering from this distressing form of thought.

First, I am sure that we must keep our tempers ; and, secondly, our sense of humour. If it is true that Protestantism rises in any degree from the absence of this



latter virtue, I am certain that Christian Science, its latest development, rises almost entirely from it. I do not say that no scientist possesses a grain of humour but that such is bound to keep it in a locked cupboard when he treats of his religion. Let us therefore bring to bear this genial solvent of laughter and see whether Christian Science is as impervious to it as to so many other facts of the world in which we live.

But supremely let us remember that the sacramental system is the one and only positive scheme which can be advanced with any hope of success. It is from the loss of this that this new heresy has had its rise. When matter was no longer understood to be the divinely-appointed vehicle of spirit, it became its enemy. Let it be our business, then, so to know our own faith that we may state it intelligently to others ; that we may show how fallen matter, evil indeed so far as it is abused, has been caught up and purified by the divinely-inspired Revelation of God ; how bread and wine brought forth from the earth by the labour of man for bodily sustenance are transformed by divine power into the Bread that comes down from heaven and the Atoning Blood of the Son of God ; how human words that in one man's mouth may deceive and ruin, in another's may convey the message of heavenly pardon ; how the water that man defiles yet flows from the Paradise of God and washes souls as well as bodies—how, in fact, the whole range of matter that had become man's enemy has become again his friend—and how that which was an occasion of falling has turned again to his wealth and peace ; and how supremely, as the very keystone of the glorious arch that God has built from earth to heaven, hangs the doctrine of the Incarnation, by which the Creator became linked ineffably to the creature, and the spiritual to the material in bonds that are eternal ;



and how, finally, the truth that the Word was made Flesh illustrates, underlies, and emphasizes in a fashion of which man could never have dreamed, the further truth of which it is the correlative, that God is a Spirit, that they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth ; that God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all.



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# SPIRITUALISM

BY THE VERY REV. MGR. R. H. BENSON

IT is becoming every day increasingly impossible for any educated man to dismiss the subject of Spiritualism with mere contempt. A matter which is engaging the earnest attention of men like Professor Barrett, Professor Oliver Lodge, and women like Mrs Henry Sidgwick ; a branch of inquiry which absorbs Professor Richet, which has changed Professor Lombroso from a convinced materialist into a believer in the spiritual world ; a religion which numbers hundreds of thousands of adherents throughout the civilized globe, including many professors at foreign universities, and has produced societies in every European country, which can trace back its spiritual descent in every civilization practically as far as ordinary theistic religion itself ; which claims, unlike other religions, to produce evidential phenomena practically at will, and to bring spiritual existences before the bar of the senses—all this can no longer be ignored or simply laughed at. A generation or two ago it was possible to take up such an attitude ; it appeared then, at least to men of average education, as if the matter had become finally discredited ; the thing lurked about among ill-informed people in slightly disreputable and dingy surroundings ; its professors, when they engaged public attention at all, were frequently detected in fraud ; there was scarcely one adherent to its philosophy—scarcely even one who thought it worth investigation—whose name was known beyond his own immediate circle. But all this has changed. The affair has come out into the light of day ; its phenomena are in process of being



respectfully judged by scientists as well as by theologians; and it must take its place at last among the recognized religions of the world.

# I (i)

Its history is, as has been said, as old as the history of civilization, and even older, since, under the form of *Necromancy*, it is said to be traceable among various nations in almost every part of the world, and it survives to-day among peoples so far removed from one another as the Esquimaux and the Hindus. It is also one of its characteristics that it usually undergoes strong revivals at periods when established creeds are beginning to lose their hold, and that it is one of the most common signs of decadence in religious thought. It is mentioned, with decided condemnation, in book after book of the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> Yet it is difficult to determine its creed, since this appears to take its colouring to a large extent from the religious thought of the respective countries in which it flourishes.<sup>2</sup> It is by its phenomena, and its startling claims to bring the spiritual world within the range of the senses, rather than by its dogmas, that it may be identified as one religion rather than many.

It would be impossible therefore to give a coherent or exhaustive account of Spiritualism considered as a world-religion. All that is possible is to describe it as it appears in the world to-day, to state its claims, and to examine its credentials. In its present form, especially under the aspect of communication through

<sup>1</sup> Lev. xx. 6. "The soul that shall go aside after magicians and soothsayers . . . I will set my face against that soul." xix. 31; 1 Kings xxviii. 3; 4 Kings xxi. 6; etc.

<sup>2</sup> Spiritistic practices have been traced amongst nations so far removed from one another as the ancient Egyptians, the Greeks, the Jews, the North American Indians. (Cf. Lapponi, *Hypnotism and Spiritism*, pp. 20 ff.)



rapping on tables, it first appeared in America in the year 1848, whence it spread quickly all over Europe.<sup>1</sup>

(ii)

Briefly speaking, the spiritualist claims that the "other world" is directly accessible to this, not merely by one revelation made once for all and preserved in its integrity, not merely by sacraments or the reception of supersensual grace, not merely by exceptional and abnormal apparitions very occasionally granted by direct Divine permission; but by constant communications from the spirits of the departed, through which men can be assured of the survival of human souls, and can receive a kind of progressive revelation of the supreme laws of the universe.

These communications are made (it is said) in a variety of ways; but for all of them there is required what is known as the *mediumistic* faculty on the part of at least one of the inquirers. The *medium* in fact is a person living in this world who, through his peculiar constitution, is enabled to act as a channel between the two worlds, and to be so used by the discarnate personalities who desire to communicate with human beings. For those communications to take place it is usually necessary for the medium to pass into a state of trance, such as was that into which the priests and priestesses of the old oracles were accustomed to pass. The usual method of procedure at spiritualistic meetings then, though not the invariable method, is as follows:—

The inquirers themselves sit round a table and endeavour to put themselves into a sympathetic attitude of mind, placing their hands upon the table in order to establish the "circle"—that is, a kind of psychical ring, connected perhaps with some unknown

<sup>1</sup> Its revival at the present day is no doubt largely due to the Protestant disregard of the doctrine of the Communion of Saints.



laws of magnetism—through which the communications may be more easily made. The “spiritual atmosphere” is often helped by the singing of hymns, the playing of soft music, or the offering of prayer. The medium, according to circumstances, sits either with the inquirers or in a cabinet apart by himself. Precautions are usually taken intended to guard against possible fraud, conscious or unconscious.

After a certain period has passed it is claimed that phenomena frequently take place that put it beyond a doubt that discarnate and intelligent spirits are present and are beginning to communicate. These are generally of one or more of the following kinds:—

(a) *Movements of inanimate objects.*—The table at which the inquirers are seated begins to tremble, to move, to emit rapping sounds, to rise from the floor in such a manner as cannot be explained by human agency. Objects in the room are seen (in the twilight, in which the séances are usually held) to move through the air; or, in darkness, are felt by the sitters to touch them. Objects are brought through closed doors and placed upon the table. Other objects are actually “materialized,” that is, are brought into existence in a manner to be discussed later. Lights of a peculiar nature are formed in the air and move about fast or slowly. A pencil placed upon a sheet of paper or within locked slates is heard to move upon the paper, and messages are found later written upon the paper or slates.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Extract from “Report on a Series of Sitzings with Eusapia Palladino,” reprinted from the *Proceedings* of the Society for Psychical Research, part lix., vol. xxiii. pp. 404, 431, 498. By the Hon. Everard Feilding, W. W. Baggally, and Hereward Carrington:—

(a) “12.5 a.m. Complete levitation of the table.

C. I hold both her ankles with my two hands.

F. I was holding her right hand in the middle of the table.

Prof. G. I was holding her left hand on the rim of the table.

F. Prof. G.’s left hand was on my right hand (across the table).

Note by M. Large movements of the table; I can just see the table up in the air. . . .”

(Extract from shorthand report taken at the time.)



(b) *Messages delivered through the mouth of the medium.*—These consist in sentences spoken by the medium, generally in a voice alien to himself, purporting to come from one or more discarnate spirits present in the room, known either personally or by repute while they lived in the body to one or more of the inquirers. It is claimed that these messages often concern private matters utterly unknown to the medium, known only to the inquirer and to the departed soul who is present. Sometimes these messages are of a private nature, sometimes of public interest, and concern spiritual and religious truths.

(c) *Messages delivered through inanimate objects.*—These come sometimes, as has been said, by means of a pencil placed on paper or within locked slates, sometimes by means of raps upon the table or the walls of a room, interpreted by a code agreed upon by the sitters. Three raps usually are taken to stand for "yes," one rap for "no."<sup>1</sup>

" 11.26 p.m. The small table is levitated right on to the séance table, through the curtains between B. and the medium. It rose to a height of two and a half feet from the floor, and is now resting on the séance table. . . ."

" 12.50 a.m. F. She taps with her right hand on mine, and the tambourine shakes synchronously within the cabinet.

C. The bell rings, and has been brought on the top of the medium's head from the cabinet, and remains there.

F. I was holding her right hand on the top of the table. I saw the bell arrive on her head. . . ."

(b) " F. A light flashed out about a foot behind and above the medium's head. It was of a brilliant bluish-green colour. (It was a steady light, and lasted about two seconds.)

11.37 p.m. F. Now another light has come out, this time on the medium's lap.

B. Both C. and F. saw a brilliant light inside the cabinet, about two and a half feet from the medium, inside the right-hand curtain. . . ."

It must be noted that these séances were conducted by trained observers under stringent test-conditions. The extracts are given from this report as containing, on the whole, descriptions of the most accurate and scientific observations made in recent times.

<sup>1</sup> "Report," etc., pp. 470, 475.

" 11.1 p.m. Four nods of her head are followed by four thumps on the table. She did not touch the table with her head.

11.54 p.m. Table tilts four times, meaning 'talk.'"



(d) *Automatic handwriting*.—For this two methods are employed. (1) Some person, usually the medium, holding a pencil passively in his fingers, begins after a little preliminary scribbling to write, sometimes at a superhuman speed, sometimes with a superhuman minuteness, sometimes in a handwriting closely resembling that used by the person whose spirit is said to be present, messages and sentences concerning private matters known to none present except the one to whom the message is directed. (2) The same results are obtained by the use of an instrument called *planchette*—that is, a little heart-shaped board running on three castors, pierced by a pencil whose point just touches a paper placed beneath. The medium's fingers are placed lightly upon the board, and the pencil moves apparently without the medium's volition. It must be noted that both these methods of communication are frequently employed by inquirers quite apart from any séance, and results are often equally well obtained.

(e) *Materialization*.—This is considered the triumph of spiritualism, and consists in its full form in the actual appearance, before the senses of sight, hearing, and touch, of a discarnate soul that has clothed itself with a body for the occasion. The phenomenon takes place in a variety of ways. It will be enough to describe the more usual.

The medium seats himself, generally partly in view of the sitters, or, if not, tightly secured by cords, within the cabinet, and passes into the state of trance. After a certain period, often of apparent distress to the medium, a certain disturbance makes itself felt: sounds are heard, or movements perceived, or a sensation of cold. There appear then, sometimes in the full sight of the sitters, a luminous cloud that gradually takes shape and existence, and is ultimately recognized by some one present as possessing the form and features of a dead friend. The degree of "materialization" varies with the amount of "power"



that is present. Sometimes it is little more than a faint vaporous intangible model, generally swathed in drapery; sometimes, it is said, the power is great enough to produce a figure that can be handled and touched, and is, apparently, in all respects like a human body, with powers of free speech and movement. Further claims are made with regard to the effect of this appearance upon the photographic lens. Photographs are shown, declared to be taken under test-conditions, representing such figures which were at the time invisible to the human eye; in such cases it is said that the "materialization" took place, but not with sufficient power to manifest itself to a less delicate instrument than the camera. The disappearance of the apparition takes place in various manners. Sometimes it passes back into the body of the medium from which it has been seen to emerge; sometimes it retires behind a curtain; sometimes it disintegrates visibly before the eyes of the sitters into a small incoherent mist, which presently itself disappears.<sup>1</sup>

## (iii)

The spiritualist theory as to the manner of these phenomena is commonly as follows:—There is said to be resident in the human body a certain force or matter called "astral"; and a medium is a person from whom this substance can be easily detached. This "astral" substance is situated on the border line between matter and spirit, and is the means by which discarnate spirits can communicate.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Report," etc., pp. 448, 449, 453, 463:—

"B. A hand comes out from behind the curtain and presses me tightly on my shoulder. I feel the thumb and the four fingers, which are now pressing downwards with very considerable force. . . ."

"At 11.38 there appeared one of these strange objects seen from time to time at Eusapia's sêances, to which, for want of a better name, the word 'head' is applied. . . ."

"C. I saw a head come out from the curtains slowly, and within six inches from my head, and it stayed out about two seconds and then went back."

<sup>2</sup> The word "astral" would seem to have been imported into Spiritualism from the East through Theosophy.



For example:—In the case of the sounds and movements mentioned above, it is believed that it is through this “astral force” that the relations with matter are set up. In the case of “materialization” it is this “astral substance” that is drawn off in great quantities, not only from the medium but even from the persons of the sitters, and moulded by the will of the communicating soul into the aspect of that body which it inhabited on earth. To the loss of this “astral substance” is attributed the state of nervous exhaustion in which mediums are so often found after emerging from trance; and to its vital relations with the medium is attributed the violent shock caused to the medium if the “materialized” figure is in any way interfered with. Opinions differ as to the extent in which the substance is reabsorbed by the person from whom it was taken after the close of the phenomena.

With regard to the explanation of the phenomena of *automatic handwriting*, it is held by spiritualists that the communicating spirit, through means of the astral power with which the writer is charged, controls his hand and his brain; with regard to the communications made through the mouth of the medium, it is his voice that is so used. It is freely conceded by spiritualists that certain well-defined dangers to the nervous centres of the medium usually accompany all attempts (especially by means of “materialization”) to communicate with the spiritual world; that deceiving spirits occasionally seek to play tricks upon the inquirers, and even to impersonate their dead relatives; but it is claimed that those perils are reduced to a minimum by the methods used, and that the gain to spiritual knowledge is incalculably greater than the loss to health or serenity.

(iv)

*The Spiritualist Creed*, as has been said, is exceedingly difficult of definition, since professed spiritual



teachings, when brought together, are frequently found to be mutually exclusive. Yet, on the whole (at least at the present day in European countries), spiritualist dogmas seem to be emerging into some kind of coherent form.

The existence of God is usually acknowledged; indeed, Sunday schools and churches organized for purposes of worship as well as of instruction, and for the training of children as mediums, have been in existence in England for many years. Beyond this it is taught that the actions of life here have a corresponding effect upon the state of existence hereafter, though the doctrine of eternal punishment is, practically always, explicitly denied. The condition of life in the next world is said to be one of progressive purification, rising, it would seem, up to some kind of absorption into the Supreme Spirit, to whom the name of God is given. All distinctively Christian doctrines are usually denied, although it is said of Jesus Christ that as a spiritual teacher He has had few equals and no superiors. It is claimed that He Himself was an adept medium, and that His appearances after the Resurrection were instances of "materialization." His Divinity is practically always explicitly denied.

It is exceedingly difficult to say more than this of the Spiritualistic creed, since, besides the divergences in various countries already mentioned, there is occasionally a further divergence even in teaching given to the same inquirer as he advances in knowledge. The disciple is at first told to practise his religion; but later on is informed that Christian worship and doctrine are only embryonic stages of the truth, and that the initiate will find all that he needs in the teaching given him by the spirits.

The dogmatic system of the Spiritualists, therefore, is best described as a vague kind of Theism, at times closely resembling Pantheism.



## II

It will be seen plainly from the foregoing pages that it will be impossible within the limits of a pamphlet to do more than sketch very lightly the criticisms that may be passed upon Spiritualism, and the reasons why the Catholic Church (and indeed all the historical religions of the world) has condemned and rejected it, and forbidden it to her children, both in its present form and under its old presentment in Necromancy. The Jewish Church herself always regarded it with horror, and inflicted the severest penalties upon all her people who meddled with it.

Very briefly, however, the reasons and criticisms are as follows:—

## (i)

First, it is necessary to remember the enormous amount of fraud that has always accompanied the practice of Spiritualism—fraud that is acknowledged and deplored, to be frank, by Spiritualists themselves. While, therefore, fraud on the part of the professors of a religion is not enough to discredit entirely the religion itself (for in that case hardly any creed would be immune), it is yet, in this instance, of sufficient gravity to cause us to doubt very seriously the reckless assertions occasionally made by Spiritualists, and to demand very searching tests indeed before any of the more startling phenomena are accepted as facts. In addition to the instances of this deliberate and conscious fraud—instances known to all who have studied the history of the movement (as, for example, in the case of the famous William Eglinton)—there must also be added unconscious fraud, exaggeration and doubtful testimony, due on the one side to the almost irresistible desire of the medium to produce evidence, and on the other to the very fierce state of nervous excitement of most inquirers under the cir-



cumstances described above.<sup>1</sup> Large deductions, therefore, must be made with regard to the whole body of evidence that is circulated generally among the public.

(ii)

There remains, however, when all such deductions have been made, a residuum (and of a very startling nature) which it is impossible to disregard; evidence, too, that fits in in a remarkable manner with much that has always been believed by Catholics; though these, as will be shown presently, give a very different explanation of it from that offered by Spiritualists.<sup>2</sup> But even this, however, must be sifted further before anything even resembling a Spiritualistic theory can be deduced from it.

It is now an established fact among psychologists that ideas, or sense-images, can be transmitted from the brain of one living person to that of another, and that the transmission takes place with increased ease if the mind of the recipient or the agent is in a

<sup>1</sup> The most recent opinion of competent judges in the case of Eusapia Palladino is that the medium in question, while possessing undoubted "powers," supplements them by fraud, both conscious and unconscious.

<sup>2</sup> From "Report of Sittings with Eusapia Palladino," etc., p. 463:—

"B., who is evidently passing through the same stages as I did in my earlier séances, toys with the suggestion of an apparatus, by way of easing his mind. It would be an interesting problem to set before a manufacturer of conjuring machines to devise an apparatus capable of producing alternatively a black, flat, profile face, a square face on a long neck, and a 'cello-like' face on a warty, wobbly body two feet long; also a white hand with movable fingers, a yellowish hand, and a hand invisible altogether—all these for use outside the curtain. Further, for use within, a hand with practicable living thumb and fingers having nails. . . . Our manufacturer must so construct the apparatus that it can be actuated unseen by a somewhat stout and elderly lady, clad in a tight plain gown, who sits outside the curtain, held visibly by hand and foot, in such a way as to escape the observation of the practical conjurers clinging about her, and on the look-out for its operation. It must further be of such dimensions as to be concealed about the lady while parading herself for inspection upon a chair, clad in her stays and a short flannel petticoat.—*E. F.*, Dec. 6, 1908."



passive condition.<sup>1</sup> We are bound, therefore, in approaching the subject from the purely scientific side, to allow that a great number at least of the alleged messages from the dead, whether given by the voice or the hand of the medium, may be nothing more than the result of this transmission of thought, or *telepathy*. It is of no evidential value to say that the inquirer in this or that instance has been reminded through such a message of a fact he had forgotten: the very fact that he recognized it as true shows that the thought somewhere resided in his brain.

(iii)

There remain the *physical* phenomena—all such things as sounds, lights, the movement of objects and “materializations”—the physical phenomena that remain, that is to say, after due deductions have been made for fraud, conscious or unconscious. There remains further to be discussed the Spiritualistic philosophy concerning them.

First, then, it must be said in fairness that, at any rate until recently, many eminent scientists who have gravely examined the physical phenomena are dissatisfied with the evidence presented in their favour. They deny, in fact, the assertion that the things in question prove the presence of discarnate spirits. Fraud and imagination, they say, are sufficient to account for all. To this, again in fairness, it must be answered that, as a rule, these inquirers approach the question in a state of convinced scepticism, and

<sup>1</sup> It is impossible, in view of recent researches, to deny any longer that *Telepathy* is an established conclusion of science. It need not be concluded, however, that what St. Thomas appears to teach as to the impossibility of purely mental communications is at all assailed by this discovery. For, curiously enough, some of the characteristics of telepathy are markedly in accordance with the philosophy of St. Thomas. For example, communications by telepathy are nearly always conveyed by faint visualized pictures. The idea is not communicated direct. This seems to correspond remarkably with what St. Thomas implies, at least, with regard to sense-images.



that convinced scepticism is exactly that condition of mind that prevents the best manifestations. Certainly it is an unfortunate dilemma, but a perfectly legitimate one. It is the dilemma in which both Huxley and his Christian adversaries were placed when the former proposed testing the efficacy of prayer by the expedient of praying for the recovery of the patients in one selected ward of a hospital, and of comparing results with those of the other wards. Faith, or at least passivity of mind, it is claimed by Spiritualists, is a condition necessary to manifestations.

To Catholics, however, and indeed to most Christians, the evidence must naturally be of a very different value from that which it has to those who are not satisfied that a spiritual world exists at all. Catholics are persuaded that it does exist, that it does manifest itself (as in the lives of the saints) to the dwellers in this. They are bound, therefore, to be predisposed to accept good evidence to the effect that in this or that instance it has manifested itself; and the only questions that remain to be settled are, firstly, do these phenomena take place among spiritualists? secondly, how are they to be interpreted?

To this first question, no adequate answer can, of course, be given. A Catholic is perfectly free to deny that such things happen if he has examined the evidence and found it insufficient. He is not free, however—if he claims to be an intelligent man—to deny its possibility. Allowing, then, that the evidence has been found sufficient to show that at séances phenomena take place—of the kind described above—in sufficient number to be considerable, and of such a nature that they cannot be attributed to human agency<sup>1</sup>—what further criticisms can be passed upon them, and what conclusions can be drawn?

<sup>1</sup> It would occupy too much space to discuss adequately the theory put forward tentatively by some observers to the effect that the "subconscious self" (*i.e.* the range of these powers and faculties, such as the power of thought-transference, unconscious cerebration, etc., lying beneath the ordinary faculties of man) is capable of producing actual physical phe-



These criticisms are of various kinds—founded respectively upon observation, and on the principles of theology.

A. *Criticisms founded on observation.*

(a) First it cannot but be remarked that the phenomena are extremely frequently of a very trifling nature at the best. Foolish tricks are continually played upon the sitters; mocking answers given, or evasions, to their questions.<sup>1</sup> These are explained by spiritualists as being the work of low-caste or earth-bound spirits who intrude themselves into the circle. Yet the very possibility of this—and it is not denied that this phenomenon is fairly common—throws a very great doubt upon the genuineness of the other communications. If it is found impossible for inquirers, even with the best intentions, to protect themselves against these annoyances, how can it be possible for them to be sure that even the graver

nomena such as some of those described in these pages. It is, of course, a possible explanation—(possible, at least, in the sense that such an assertion cannot possibly be disproved, since it attributes to an almost wholly unknown part of human nature forces completely unanalogous to any others possessed by man)—but so also might it be attributed to electricity or ether, or some completely unknown but natural agency. To those, however, who believe at all in the existence of a spiritual world, it will seem a far more tenable hypothesis to suppose that it is from this spiritual world that the force is generated; and therefore, so far as the evidence goes, a more scientific hypothesis.

<sup>1</sup>(a) "I was suddenly startled by a noise like that of hammering, and of occasional footsteps, clearly emanating from the bedroom occupied by my friend. . . . The strange noises, which appeared to have ceased at the moment of my entrance, recommenced almost immediately with the utmost vigour, and I became the witness of a scene such as I have never witnessed before. . . . A hundred hands seemed to be hammering away on walls and doors and table and bed, and every now and then there was the sound of feet tramping along the floor. . . . As morning dawned the noises gradually ceased."—(*Dangers of Spiritualism*, pp. 45, 46.)

(b) "The moment the door is opened, it may be by the presence of persons of like inclinations, of ignorant or credulous mediums . . . or men of immoral or intemperate habits, troops of so-called 'dark' spirits rush in, and indulge these propensities to silly tricks, lying deception, and temptation to evil."—(Letter from a spiritualist of twenty years' standing, quoted in *Dangers of Spiritualism*, p. 125.)



messages come from those personalities that profess to send them?

(b) This doubt is further enhanced by the extraordinary meagreness even of the most solemn "spiritual teachings." If the spiritualistic theory were true, if it were a fact that some of the greatest thinkers and scientists in the world's history, consumed by a desire to illuminate their brethren still living on earth, returned to give them that teaching, how is it that no historical mystery has ever yet been solved by this means, no scientific problem answered, no ascetical doctrine superior to that already given by teachers on earth ever yet bestowed? The collections of "spiritual teachings" circulated from time to time among the public seldom surpass in intelligence or knowledge the average works of writers even still incarnate; much less do they approximate in knowledge or spirituality to the teachings of the greatest spiritual Leaders of the past.

(c) It is a matter of regret among spiritualists themselves that occasionally, after the most poignant scenes, when the presence of some departed friend has been recognized by one of the inquirers, further investigation has shown that the communicating personality has broken down in some perfectly simple test of identity.<sup>1</sup> This seems to lead to the inevitable conclusion that in some cases at least the discarnate spirit that has manifested itself has been deliberately

<sup>1</sup> "The absolute futility of any attempt at identifying spirits is another discouraging or unsatisfactory circumstance. It is no proof that the spirit communicating is A. B. if he tells me of words or circumstances (supposed to be) known only to A. B. and myself. . . . The alleged 'friend' of a few years ago (while he was writing through me, and turning my ideas upside down through his extraordinary 'counsel' and hypocrisy) certainly was possessed of knowledge of my present history unknown to anybody else. . . . Now if one's diary of thoughts and acts is an open book for one spirit and another to read at his convenience, nothing that he may resurrect to one's mind is any proof that he is trustworthy . . . any more than would be the case if a shoeblack read over one's shoulder what one had written . . . and claimed by virtue of his knowledge that he was one's father or mother."—(Extract from a letter quoted in *Dangers of Spiritualism*, pp. 115, 116.)



impersonating another in a most heartless manner. Grave suspicion then is bound to remain even in cases where fraud of this kind has not been detected.

(d) It is a matter of common knowledge among spiritualists that the nervous exhaustion which so often comes upon the medium during or after a séance has led in many cases to a complete breakdown of the mental and moral powers. This is not, of course, in any sense a conclusive argument; religious mania is known in every creed; but the fact becomes more significant when it is remembered that, on the other side, Spiritualism has not produced characters of any extraordinary sanctity or eminence. Except in the cases where materialists have been convinced through means of Spiritualism of the existence of another world, it is impossible to point to any spiritual or mental gain to balance the extremely numerous losses on the other side.

(e) Further, it is exceedingly easy to adduce testimony after testimony from those who, once spiritualists, have relinquished the life because of the loss not only of mental but also moral virtues. An extremely unpleasant symptom in the case of inquirers too much absorbed in such practices as those of *planchette* or ordinary *automatic handwriting* is the appearance of the obscene and blasphemous element in the communications received. Of course such results as those, as well as others less terrible (such as loss of will-power, morbidity, etc.) may very well arise from the mere passivity of mind necessary for success in such experiments, and from the consequent uprush of those realms of human consciousness not directly controlled by the will (as in the case of delirium). Yet, even with all allowances made for such possibilities, there would seem to remain a certain malignancy of deliberate purpose, a certain design followed in the process, certainly not intended by the inquirer, that would argue strongly in favour of another personality being at work. At any rate, in such cases, there is an inten-



tion of communicating with the spiritual world; and if this means of communication were according to the Divine will—if even it were true that the communicating personalities were those which they professed to be—it would be difficult to account for the persistence of this phenomenon.

The following extract from a letter to the author of *The Dangers of Spiritualism* is given at length, as containing an excellent analysis of the state of brain and nerves—to say the least—brought on by the continued practice of automatic handwriting.

“But now comes the worst part of the whole story. My whole being had manifestly undergone a change; I seemed to have received another nature—gross, vile, sensual, originating the most vile and abominable ideas, such as had never formerly entered into my mental life. My old self was still there, thank God! I have never quite lost that. But, although rebellious and disgusted, it nevertheless seemed powerless against the stronger, evil influence which was dominating it. It was as if some unclean spirit had taken possession of me, had driven out my old self, and was using my mind and body for its own vile purposes. At first, I fought and struggled against it, and tried to rouse myself; but it was all to no purpose. All the day long my body was tired, weighed down by a heavy, languid, care-for-nothing feeling. I had no desire but to lie down and to let my thoughts go wandering. I lost interest in everything I used to delight in in former times. I dropped my studies; my hobbies had no longer any charm for me; everything seemed an effort and a trouble. I have read of the mental and physical condition of opium-smokers, and it certainly seemed to me as if I was overpowered by a kind of moral opium which simply rendered me powerless to make any more effort. Only when evening came I seemed capable of moving. I then began to grow restless. If I went to bed I could not sleep, but simply lay awake, my brain all activity,



imagining, picturing the most wretched abominations. Dreading, therefore, to go to bed, I used to go out. Invariably I would find myself proceeding to some low public-house, not to drink, but just to be in the company of, and to hobnob with, any dirty, low fellow I would find there. And, strange to say, such would receive me just as one of themselves, while I felt perfectly at home with them—I, who had never been in the habit of frequenting the bar of even the most respectable public-house. I had no desire whatever to go among decent people of my own station of life; on the contrary, I liked the company I met with in these places; I liked the low, foul conversation; I revelled in the filthy talk! I would treat my companions to drink, and positively enjoyed seeing them drunk. The smell of the stale beer, of the rank tobacco, their crude familiarities, were like tonics to me. The weariness would go; I would sing and laugh with the loudest of them, thinking it a fine thing to be called a ‘jolly good chap.’ I could never get drunk myself; a single pint of beer would make me sick. When morning came I would get up, haggard, tired, ashamed, disgusted, afraid to meet any person of my acquaintance. I can’t describe all the horrible things I went through, some of them veritable orgies. Time passed, things gradually got worse; I dropped my old friends, or they dropped me. I became unsettled and miserable in my work; I felt that I could not remain in my place, that I must get away. With new scenes and new faces I might get the better of this thing. So I sent in my resignation and left the town. . . . At present I am living an idle, aimless life, just existing on the payment I obtain for a few hours’ private teaching a week, and a few shillings picked up playing the piano in public-houses. I am without hopes, prospects, or friends. What is there to live for?

“And now let me draw attention to one or two curious points in my history. It is very difficult to



explain exactly the relationship between the two natures inhabiting my body. I shall make myself better understood if I use the word *ego* to signify my own mental identity, and *alter* that of the other. By *I* and *me* I mean my physical self (common to both). Both of them are *I*; but the two are never 'in residence' at the same time. There is now no struggle for mastery. The change is imperceptible. I may now be *ego*, then I suddenly find myself *alter*. This latter, without warning, comes and takes possession, drives out *ego*, or paralyses him, does what he likes, and just as suddenly goes. He just ignores, never remembers or thinks of *ego*. *Ego*, on the contrary, has a vivid recollection of *alter*, is disgusted with him, loathes him, fears him, looks upon him as a vile, sensual thief, who has robbed him (*ego*) of all that made life worth living. When I am *alter* I am strong, active in mind and body, full of devilry, daring anything, imagining and enjoying all evil. When *alter* goes, poor, pitiful *ego* just creeps back into a weak, exhausted body, weary, tired of life, full of remorse, making good resolutions, yet having no power to carry them out. There is one other point. If I can manage to get off into a good sleep, *alter* seems to be powerless. My dreams are always pleasant, mostly of people and places of the good old times, never of anything bad. It is only when I am awake, and when my mind is unemployed, that *alter* catches me. My worst time is at night. If I go to bed without being able to sleep, *alter* is in full possession, running riot with my imagination till the morning.

"There may have been no connection between my dabbling in telepathy and this other thing, but, rightly or wrongly, I believe that on that night some unclean spirit attached itself to me, gradually gaining influence over my nature, and in the end making me his mere slave. For very shame I have been obliged to keep the whole matter to myself. People sometimes marvel (and well they might) at the change which has come



over me. My sense of fairness will not permit me to put the whole blame upon telepathy ; there may have been some unconscious error on my part, or some circumstance unknown to me may have caused this alteration in my life. The fact itself remains ; I know what I was before that evening, and I know what I have been since.

"I have only succeeded in writing this by fits and starts when I am *ego* ; *alter* nearly threw it all into the fire last evening, calling it a d——d lot of rubbish."

So much, then, for criticisms founded on observation. We pass on to—

B. *Criticisms founded on theology.*

It must first be remarked that the following criticisms will have no weight with those who approach the subject of Spiritualism as pure agnostics—beyond the weight of the fact that historical religion has always recognized the existence of Spiritualism or Necromancy, and, up to a certain point at least, the objectivity of its phenomena.

For it is not only the Catholic Church that has condemned Spiritualism, the Protestant bodies have usually done so as well, and the Jewish Church punished the adherents of Necromancy with death. Spiritualism, or Necromancy, or the dealing with "familiar spirits," has always been regarded by the other great world-religions as a bastard, rather than a competitor with a dignity comparable to their own. This fact is at least significant.

(a) First, then, it is sufficient for the Catholic to recognize that Spiritualism is, dogmatically, an adversary, and not an ally of his own creed. It is claimed sometimes that Spiritualism and Christianity are compatible, and, theoretically, it may be so ; but, practically, their dogmatic systems are mutually exclusive, and Christians who practise Spiritualism are bound in the long-run to choose between that faith and their own. So far as Spiritualism has produced a coherent creed at all, it directly traverses



even such fundamental doctrines as that of the Incarnation.

(b) Catholic theology teaches in detail that the destiny of all men at death takes them elsewhere in the spiritual world. It is entirely incompatible with Catholic belief to believe that the souls of the departed are allowed, except under very peculiar and unusual circumstances, to revisit this earth with the intention of communicating with those still living upon it. To believe that those souls are so far at the mercy of mediums as to be compelled, practically, in instance after instance, to manifest themselves here—particularly under such circumstances as usually accompany spiritualistic séances—is utterly antagonistic both to the letter and the spirit of Catholic teaching.

For these two main reasons, then, as well as for others mentioned above, the Catholic Church condemns Spiritualism without reserve. She acknowledges the fact that the spiritual world is accessible to this, and this to that; but she lays down most stringently the only modes in which such communication may be sought, and denounces the rest as methods contrary to the Divine Will.

(c) What, then, is the view of Catholic theologians as regards the phenomena claimed by Spiritualists?

First it must be noted that Catholics do not pledge themselves, as a matter of faith, even to the objectivity of the phenomena. This or that piece of evidence must be judged, as all other evidence, even in support of alleged Catholic miracles, simply on its own weight. At the same time it is undoubtedly true that Catholic theologians as a whole are disposed to accept much of the evidence offered by Spiritualists as a sufficient proof that phenomena do take place at séances and elsewhere which cannot be accounted for on natural grounds. The explanation given, then, is as follows:—

(1) Christians are aware from quite other reasons than those given by Spiritualists that the spiritual world is a fact, that it is inhabited by innumerable



personalities, good and bad, and that to many of these personalities—that is, to spirits that have never been incarnate—this world is perfectly accessible. On the one side are the unfallen angels of God, on the other the fallen; and this earth is to a large extent the battle-ground between these opposing forces. The object of the angels of light is to draw men nearer to God, to protect them from spiritual and even bodily dangers, and to help them towards heaven; the object of the angels of darkness is exactly the opposite.

Now the precise range of powers permitted to the evil angels has not been revealed to men; we know only that they are considerable, though limited; and we may at least conjecture that as it has been permitted in the past to the angels of light to assume a human appearance, so it is at any rate quite possible that the same power may be allowed to their adversaries. We know also as a positive fact that the evil angels are permitted under certain circumstances to obtain such a hold over men who yield to them as actually to *obsess* or *possess*<sup>1</sup> their powers and their will.

(2) Turning once more to the phenomena of Spiritualism, it is to be noticed that the Christian faith is continually assailed by those professed “benefactors” of man; that the mental powers or the morality of those who practise Spiritualism are extremely liable to decay; and further, that the process employed is one calculated to undermine almost imperceptibly the faith and morals of even those who approach the investigation with good intentions. In a word, it would seem that—if the alleged experiences are facts—they are designed with considerable skill to the carrying out of that very object which Catholics believe to be the aim of the spiritual enemies of man. Inquirers are met on their most tender side, the

<sup>1</sup> “Obsession” means the persecution of the human will or imagination; “possession,” its more or less complete control by a discarnate spirit.



appeal is made to their highest human affections; they are led on by apparent proof after apparent proof to believe that they are actually in communication with those they once loved on earth. It would appear almost inevitable, then, that such inquirers should ultimately accept such teaching as they receive—and we have seen of what character that teaching is—as undeniable truth. For every man that is converted by Spiritualism to believe in the immortality of his soul, there are probably a hundred who are led by it to relinquish the beliefs and practices of Christianity.

Further evidence in support of the Catholic theory is found in the facts related above under the heading *Criticisms founded on observation*. The large proportion of fraud, both on the part of mediums and of the personalities that claim to communicate, the trifling and often mischievous tricks and evasions with which serious inquiry is so often met, the solemnity of the claim to shed light from the spiritual world upon the problems of this world, coupled with the extraordinary futility of the "revelations" so made, as well as the continual injuries inflicted upon the bodily and mental health of the mediums and the inquirers—all those considerations support very strongly the Catholic contention that the phenomena, if genuine, must be the work of the avowed spiritual enemies of the human race. Theologians emphasize this the more from the fact that in extreme cases of nervous or mental breakdown following upon the practices of Spiritualism, symptoms make their appearance identical with, or at least closely resembling, those which accompany undoubted cases of "possession"; and "possession," it must be remembered, has been familiar to Catholics for many centuries; its treatment finds a regular place in the Ritual and Exorcisms of the Church, and the fact of it is vouched for explicitly in the New Testament.

As regards the exact mode by which the genuine



phenomena—if they exist—are produced, Catholic theology offers no definite opinion. All that can be said is that an acceptance of the “astral” theory is not condemned. It is conceivable that there may be some such force or substance in the human constitution, but of this Catholic theology has no cognizance. It is a matter of psychical, or even physical science, rather than of theology or philosophy.

This, then, is the attitude of the Catholic Church towards Spiritualism:—

(1) She does not in any way commit herself to the acceptance of the phenomena. Yet she does not deny them, and allows fully for their possibility. Each claim stands or falls on its own proper evidence.

(2) So far as the alleged phenomena are genuine, the Catholic Church accounts for them by the action of evil discarnate spirits—called “fallen angels.” She utterly rejects, therefore, their testimony, and warns her children against accepting it.

(3) She condemns in the gravest manner any attempt to communicate in this manner with the spiritual world, as contrary to the Divine Will.

(4) She leaves open—granted the genuineness of the phenomena—the mode in which such phenomena are accomplished.

#### BOOKS RECOMMENDED.

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# CATHOLICISM

BY MONSIGNOR ROBERT HUGH BENSON

A MAN'S religion is, in its essence, that system of faith and morals by which he believes that he can enter and remain in right relations with God. In a description therefore of any religion in particular, three main points must be eminent: (1) the account given of God by that religion—His Being, His Nature, His Action; (2) the account given of man—his being, his origin, his nature, his final end; (3) the system by which it is hoped to bring about and to sustain right relations between God and man. It is along these three main lines, therefore, that the following pages will run. They will close with a few detached paragraphs on particular points that cannot well be dealt with in the course of the sustained exposition.

## I

The account given, by the Catholic Religion, of God is capable of literally endless expansion, since Infinity is the first thing predicated of Him. Every word or epithet, therefore, applied to God, is only applicable to Him in an analogical or derived sense. When He is called "Just" or "Holy," He is so called since no better words are at our disposal; yet no word so applied to Him signifies exactly the same as when applied to man, since man is finite and God Infinite.

*The Being of God.*—First, then, it is believed by Catholics that God is Eternal, that He has had no beginning and will have no end, that He is in Himself immutable, knowing no progress since He has



always been Himself final and ultimate Perfection. His "essential glory" then can have no addition or diminution ; it is His "accidental glory" only to which created wills can minister. He alone subsists of Himself ; all else exists only by Him. He is "Personal," yet without the limitations associated with that idea.

In the Divine Nature, however, there are Three "Persons," all co-eternal and co-equal ; and the names by which they are known to man are "Father," "Son," and "Holy Ghost." There is no inferiority between them, as the "Arian" heresy maintained ; neither are they merely three various Actions or Aspects, as the "Sabellians" taught. They are distinct one from the other ; yet they are one. A far-off analogy is sometimes used with regard to this "Mystery of the Blessed Trinity"—by which the union and yet the distinctness of the Memory, the Will, and the Understanding in man is thought to bear a certain resemblance to the relations of the Three Persons in the One God. Another suggestive analogy is the consideration of the three things necessary to any action or any agent. There must be the Agent, the Action, and the Acting : the Lover, the Beloved, and the Loving ; and a further suggestion as to the value of this analogy is to be found in the Christian term "The Eternal Word" as applied to the Second Person. Under this aspect it may be said that the "Father" is the Originator and Source, the "Son" the Word eternally uttered or "generated" by Him, and the "Holy Ghost" the personal Link between the two, "proceeding from both." Yet it must be remembered that each is a "Person," and each is equal to each ;—in other words, that no analogy is exhaustive, or even perfect so far as it goes.

Finally, it must be said that every epithet and



attribute that predicates goodness or beauty or truth can be applied fully and infinitely and ultimately to God alone. "There is none good save God." All other persons and things are "good" only in proportion as they approach the Perfection of the Divine Will.

*The Creation.*—So far the outline of God-in-Himself only has been considered—the outline, that is, which Catholic Dogmatic Theology lays down as revealed. Beyond that outline—beyond, that is to say, the numerous dogmas that further develop and safeguard the main Facts which Catholics claim have been revealed by God Himself—there remains a literally infinite field for speculation, beyond even those points on which theologians have disputed in the past. The knowledge of God in its entirety, so far as that is open to creatures, is only possible in the "Beatific Vision" Itself. The next point, then, to consider, is the manner in which Catholics believe the universe to have come into existence.

The word used by the Church is *Creation*, by which she intends deliberately to rule out either that the Universe is a kind of emanation from God in such a sense that the word "Divine" can be applied to its nature; or that it has existed co-eternally along with God. She further explains her meaning by adding that God *created* all things that are or have been, *out of nothing*. It was in no sense by a necessity of His Being that He created the Universe; neither was it by any kind of evolution from Himself that it came to exist. He created all things out of nothing by a free act of His own Sovereign Will. And if it be asked, Why did He so create? it can only be answered, humanwise, that He saw that more "good"—more, that is, to His own "accidental" glory—would be the result than if He had not so acted. His Foreknowledge is perfect; yet it must be remembered also that the Catholic Church entirely



denies Calvinistic teaching to the effect that that Foreknowledge constrains any will that He has created free. The situation may be tolerably summed up by saying, God foreordained because He foreknew ; He did not foreknow because He foreordained.

Now this Act of God, called Creation, first brought into being an unknown number of beings purely spiritual, like God Himself. These are named generally *Angels*, and are divided into Nine Orders. It is further believed that these Angels underwent a certain probation ; they possessed, therefore, free-wills ; and in the event a certain proportion of these beings "fell." There has been in the past much speculation among theologians as to the nature of the trial they underwent : yet nothing is dogmatically defined on the subject. Following the creation of the Angels, there came at some unknown period that of the world in which men live ; and, finally, of man himself. So far, however, definition is of the slightest. It is to these main dogmas only that the Church authoritatively witnesses. An enormous latitude is permitted to Catholics as regards the time and the place and the circumstances and even the interpretations of the events of which these doctrines speak. It is at the next point that a far more precise defining begins.

## II

Man, unlike the Angels, is not pure spirit : he is spirit incarnate. He was created innocent, with a certain knowledge of God, though not that full knowledge of which he is capable, and enjoyed Grace. Like the Angels, however, he was created *free*, and like the Angels who fell, he too fell.

Now this is an exceedingly significant doctrine, for upon it depends, in a sense, the entire system known as the Catholic Religion. If man were



merely a creature struggling upwards always, the most fundamental Catholic dogmas would be evacuated of meaning. Certainly it is open to a Catholic to believe that a certain kind of evolution had place in the process of man's creation, that his body, for example, was gradually fitted by selection and generation to be the habitation of an immortal rational soul. But it is an essential of the Catholic Faith that man's spirit when first created was both free and innocent, and that it fell from innocence by the abuse of its own free-will.

Man was created, then, to know and serve God in this world and to enjoy Him for ever in the next world. Yet man's first parents fell from this destiny, and transmitted that fallen nature to their descendants. And it is only possible for fallen man to regain his position by the aid of God's Grace—that is, by free gifts from God of light and strength. Further, the Sin of Man is so great an outrage against God that nothing but an adequate sacrifice can compensate for it, or can win for man that access to Grace by which alone he can rise again to a state of friendship and union with his Creator. As to what this Sacrifice proves to be, and as to the various methods and channels by which Grace comes, we shall consider later.

This, then, the Church teaches, is the state in which the natural man finds himself in this world. He is fallen, but he is not (as Calvin taught) absolutely corrupt: he has still a conscience—that is, a faculty by which he can discern good and evil; he has still aspirations after good, and, by the mercy of God, a certain power of choosing it: he is still "free," though his freedom is enormously hampered by that downward tendency that is the result of the Fall. Further, it is taught, every man has sufficient grace for salvation—sufficient help, that is, from God, to regain the destiny for which God made him,



and to avoid the final doom to which sin naturally leads. He is faced by two final states, and two only ; and he has but this one life on earth for his probation. If he "corresponds" sufficiently with the grace that God gives him he passes gradually upwards to that union with God of which he is capable, and in Heaven enjoys eternally the "Beatific Vision"—a state in which he at once preserves his own individuality and yet is united to God. If, on the other hand, he fails to correspond with grace, and yields to the downward drag of his fallen nature in such a degree as to be, when his probation closes with death, in a state of "enmity" with God, he passes to that state which he himself has, *in effect*, freely chosen, and in hell is excluded eternally from the presence of his Creator. Only, it must be noticed in passing, never yet on any individual has the Catholic Church uttered a decision of final condemnation, since the interior dispositions of a man at the time of his death can be known only to God. No excommunication or anathema can be more than an approximate attempt to deal with the soul so far as she falls under the Church's jurisdiction, and such are issued with the express hope of awakening such a soul to her own condition of danger. Neither does the Church for one moment dare to dogmatize as to the state of those who die outside her pale ; for even though, as will be seen later, she claims to be the One Ark of Salvation, this does not in any sense derogate from God's Sovereign right and power to deal with souls in His own way.

### III

So far much that has been said is applicable to nearly all Theistic belief. It is as to the nature of the system by which fallen man may be restored



that the differences begin to manifest themselves more particularly.

The central doctrine of the Catholic Religion is that of the Incarnation. This doctrine teaches that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity at a certain moment in history was "made man" in such a sense that He assumed complete Human Nature, both body and soul, yet without ceasing to be God or suffering any essential change, that He was born of a woman, lived a human life, and after His death reunited again in the Resurrection both Body and Soul, and finally took back in the Ascension that human nature with Him, perfected and transfigured, to the "Throne" of God. It is by this Incarnation, this "Hypostatic Union" between God and Man in Jesus Christ, that God and man are reunited. Intimately bound up with the doctrine of the Incarnation is that of the *Atonement*, in which it is believed that the free offering by Jesus Christ of Himself to God—an offering consummated in His Crucifixion on Calvary—constituted the Sacrifice which alone is adequate to compensate for the Sin of Man.

Innumerable interpretations of these doctrines, especially of that of the Incarnation, have been successively rejected by the Church under the name of *Heresies*. It is necessary to touch on a few of these, since it was by their rejection that the Catholic doctrine itself has more precisely emerged. It must be remembered, however, that in the Catholic view all dealings of God with man—of the Infinite with the finite—are bound to be enveloped largely in mystery. The Church claims to state and safeguard the facts revealed by God, not always to reconcile and elucidate them exhaustively.

Heresies on the Incarnation fall roughly into two classes: namely, those which minimize, respectively, the Human Nature or the Divine Nature of Jesus



Christ. The former, and the earlier in point of history, regarded the Human Nature of Christ as either so drowned in the Divinity as to be practically negligible, or as phantom-like and unreal. In opposition to this the Catholic Church teaches that the Human Nature was completely real ; and that therefore the sufferings and needs of that Human Nature were also real. Without this reality the Sacrifice of Calvary would be no more than a drama acted for men's imitation or admiration. Christ had, in fact, a Human Will also, and was capable therefore of feeling the stress of temptation, though Himself actually incapable of sin. The later heresies, largely adopted at the present day by many who claim the name of Christian, minimize the Divinity of Christ, using that word only to denote either a superhuman quality of goodness or a human quality raised to the utmost intensity ; and in opposition to this the Church teaches that the Person of Jesus Christ was, and has always continued to be, the Eternal Word, the Second Person of the Trinity, immutable and unchanged ; that He possessed therefore all the attributes of the Deity since He Himself was God ; even further, that His Human Nature, so intimate was its union with God, enjoyed always and unceasingly even upon earth the Beatific Vision ; and, in virtue of that same union, was and is a proper object of adoration.

It will be seen plainly then that the doctrine of the Atonement depends absolutely upon the doctrine of the Incarnation. If the Human Nature of Christ were in any sense unreal, the Incarnation would be unnecessary. If the Divinity of Christ were not absolute, His Sacrifice would, at the most, only differ from the death of martyrs and saints in degree but not in kind ; and again the Incarnation would be unnecessary. As perfect God and perfect Man,



however, He accomplished what neither God nor man could accomplish separately : He united real Humanity to real Divinity ; and by His Sacrifice consummated that union, and atoned for that for which man alone was incapable of atoning.

This, very briefly, then, is the foundation of the Catholic Religion, and has been, at any rate, until comparatively recently, the foundation of all Protestantism as well. It is claimed, however, by Catholics that certain other doctrines follow inevitably (and were actually so revealed by Christ), and that the rejection of these doctrines by Protestantism has led to obscurity and even to positive heresy on the fundamental dogmas themselves.

First, then, the Catholic Religion teaches that the Grace and Spiritual Power released by the Incarnation and the Atonement need, and were supplied with, means by which such grace should be perpetually applied to the individual. Certainly the individual, where such means fail, can, by the mercy of God, interiorly apprehend the grace necessary for his salvation ; but, it is claimed, Christ, who wrought these things under terms of time and space, has provided means also under terms of time and space by which such grace is applied. Secondly, it is claimed that the truths revealed by Christ need in every age a Living Voice by which vital questions may be answered, and an infallible Authority by which such truths may be safeguarded. A Revelation enshrined in a written book ceases, by the variety of interpretations applied to it, to be a positive or certain Revelation at all, unless there be an authoritative and infallible Teacher on Earth to decide between such interpretations. The Catholic Church, therefore, unlike Protestantism, while she regards the Bible as the Word of God and as one fount of Truth, adds as a second and equally important fount

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of Truth, the Tradition committed to her by Christ, in the guardianship of which she believes herself divinely safeguarded.

Let us consider these points one by one, in the reverse order in which they have been stated.

(1) Catholics believe that God was made man in order, among other things, to deliver a body of truth to man, much of which he might have guessed at, some of which he might positively have known, some of which he could neither have known nor guessed at. This body of truth was delivered to His Apostles; and it is beyond the power or the rights of their successors either to add to, or to diminish, in the smallest degree, this Divine Revelation.

Christ constituted, however, a *Church*—that is to say, a group of persons raised, by certain rites which we shall consider later, to the supernatural state, and intended to embrace sooner or later the whole of human kind; and one of the functions of this Church is to preserve aright and to promulgate the truths revealed to her by Christ. Yet, while the Church may not modify the truths themselves, she will “develop,” as time goes by, their contents; she will, for instance, make more explicit that which was at first implicit or obscure, in answer to questions or denials on matters of faith; and in this action—in the exercise, that is to say, of this supreme dogmatic function of hers—she believes herself so far safeguarded by the assistance of God as to be incapable of teaching error. This gift of *Infallibility*, it will be noticed, is quite another thing from *Inspiration*. The former is rather a negative gift by which she is kept immune from error; the latter a positive impulse, given to the prophets and the writers of Scripture, including Infallibility, but transcending it. The Church does not claim Inspiration, either for her General Councils or for her Divinely appointed



Head ; yet she claims entire infallibility for these two mouths of hers by which she formally *defines* truth.

The Unity of the Church is provided for in the following manner :

Christ, it is recorded in the Gospels, chose out one from among His Apostles to be the leader, and, in a sense, the centre of the rest ; and He particularized him in many ways. First He gave him a new name, and Himself supplied the interpretation of that name. He called him *Cephas*, or Peter ; and added that “upon this *Cephas*” (He) would build His Church ; further adding that “the gates of hell should not prevail against” this Church. Next He said that to him He would give “the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven” ; and lastly commissioned him to “feed His sheep.” It is noticeable that these three functions thus representatively conferred upon Peter are predicated in their fulness only of Christ Himself : He is the “Foundation Stone,” the “Door,” and the “Good Shepherd.”

Catholics therefore claim that the Church of Christ—that Church to which Christ committed such functions and to which He promised His continual Presence—can be identified by its unity with Peter ; and the See of Rome, therefore, where Peter lived and died, is called the “Holy ” or the “Apostolic ” See ; and its occupant is regarded as having inherited the prerogatives of Peter. Among these prerogatives, therefore, is that of safeguarding and defining the truth ; and the Bishop of Rome, or “Pope,” is named the “Vicar of Christ.” He, therefore, when, as supreme Pastor of Souls, in a matter of Faith or Morals, he defines a truth to be held by all Christians, acts in virtue of his commission from Christ, and is divinely safeguarded from error. His prerogative does not preclude the possibility of his erring in his private capacity ; still less does it preserve him from personal sin.



The promises of Christ, however, were made to the whole Church in the person of Peter; and a properly constituted "General Council" therefore, sitting under the presidentship of "Peter," is also believed to be infallible. In cases where such a Council has sat, the Pope does no more than ratify and confirm the decisions which, it is believed, are also safeguarded from error by the same promises of Christ. To the Pope also belongs supreme *jurisdiction*, and from him every bishop and priest draws his right to act in his official capacity. Most of these acts are *valid*, though irregular, even when exercised in defiance of, or separation from, the Pope; some of them—for example, absolution or the Power of the Keys—are *invalid* as well as *irregular* under those conditions.

(2) The second great function of the Church is that of Dispenser of Grace.

The Incarnation and the Atonement, as has been seen, are believed to have released an infinite torrent of grace for the salvation of all mankind; but this grace must, normally, be applied to the individual through certain channels and agents. Chief among these channels are the *Sacraments*; chief among these agents is the Sacerdotal Hierarchy; and the second is, normally, the dispenser of the former.

(a) The *Sacraments* are seven in number: *Baptism*; *Penance*; *the Eucharist*; *Confirmation*; *Holy Order*; *Holy Matrimony*; and *Extreme Unction*. First, however, the Eucharist should be considered, as it is more than a Sacrament.

According to the doctrine of the Atonement, Christ offered on Calvary the one perfect and adequate Sacrifice for the sins of the world. A Sacrifice is commonly believed to involve two things: primarily the offering and death of a Victim, and secondarily an Union with God to whom the Victim is offered



by means of a feast upon its Flesh. Two things therefore are involved in the Atonement wrought by Christ: there is first the Sacrifice proper; there is next Communion with God by feeding upon the Divine Victim.

Now Christ spoke of these two things expressly in one sentence, "The (Living) Bread which I will give is My Flesh which I will give for the life of the world"; and again, "Except you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you have no life in you." Further, He instituted a Rite by which (1) the Sacrifice once offered should be continually re-presented to God; (2) the Flesh and Blood, thus sacrificed, should be made accessible for human food. This Rite is called the *Eucharist*.

In the Eucharist, by Divine Power exercised through the priest, the "elements" of Bread and Wine are changed *substantially* (though not *accidentally*) into the very Flesh and Blood of Christ. This is called the dogma of *Transubstantiation*, and signifies that while the externals or "accidents" of the elements—those qualities accessible to the senses—remain unchanged, the *substance*—that in which the "accidents" inhere and by which, for instance, the bread *is* bread—is changed into the substance of the Body and Blood of Christ. In the transubstantiated elements there is no actual separation of Body and Blood; the Host and the contents of the chalice are, alike, Christ whole and entire (since a real separation would involve another death of Christ); but the two different elements are used in order to signify and to re-present, mystically, that actual separation which took place on Calvary.

Here, then, in the Eucharist, is, first, the *Sacrifice of the Mass*—the re-presenting, that is, under another mode, of the Sacrifice of Calvary; then in the Communion, the Body and Blood of the Sacrificed



Divine Victim are assimilated by the participators. Lastly, in Catholic Churches, the "Blessed Sacrament" is preserved in the Tabernacle, and both here, and in the service of *Benediction*, is adored by Catholics. The Eucharist, therefore, pre-eminently above the other Sacraments, is sometimes referred to as the "extension of the Incarnation," though all the Sacraments are this also in their degree. But in the Eucharist, according to Catholic belief, the Human Nature of Christ is always present on earth—dwelling in the Tabernacle, sacrificed in the Mass, and assimilable in Communion.

*Baptism* is the Rite ordained by Christ for the washing away of original sin; and *Penance* (or *Absolution*) for the further washing away of sins afterwards contracted.

*Baptism* therefore is the first sacrament received by the individual. Since man is not pure spirit, but spirit incarnate, the supreme means of grace also have something of this double nature—an external visible part, and the interior grace conveyed by it: and *Baptism* (which, like matrimony, does not necessarily require a priest for its valid administration) is an outward ablution accompanied by certain words, which whole Rite raises the catechumen to the supernatural life, removes his sins, original and actual, and infuses certain graces into the soul. It is "necessary to salvation"; yet the Church has always held that the "Baptism of Desire"—*i. e.* God's response to a perfectly pure and good intention of pleasing Him, accompanied by an implicit wish to conform in all things to His Will and therefore inclusive of a desire for baptism, if the necessity of such were known to the individual—confers the grace of the sacrament upon those who are unable actually to obtain it.

*Penance* is the sacrament instituted by Christ, by which post-baptismal sins are forgiven through the



ministry of a priest acting judicially, 'in virtue of Christ's words to His apostles, "Whosoever sins you forgive they are forgiven."

*Confirmation* is the sacrament by which certain gifts of the Holy Ghost—seven in number—beyond those received in baptism, are conveyed to the individual, primarily for his strengthening in the battle of life.

*Holy Order* is the sacrament by which men are raised to the ministry, and made sharers in and administrators of the Royal Priesthood of Jesus Christ.

*Holy Matrimony* is the sacrament by which a man and a woman are united before God in such a manner that what would, without grace, be merely a contract terminable or dissoluble, becomes a mysterious uniting of the two that nothing but death can sever. The Church entirely denies divorce, and refuses the sacraments to those who have profited by a legal "divorce" to marry again in the lifetime of their surviving partners.

*Extreme Unction* ("The Last Anointing") is the sacrament by which the sick in danger of death are frequently restored to health, or, if not, purified and made ready for death.

Lastly, on the point of the Sacraments, it must be added that three of them—Baptism, Confirmation, and Order—confer "Character," or an indelible seal upon the soul; and these three sacraments therefore can be received but once. These are also the three sacraments in which the Holy Ghost acts directly upon the soul and is "given" to her.

(b) The Sacraments are, as has been seen, dispensed by the Church, and for five of them the ministry of a priest is essential for validity; further, for two of these five (for *Order* absolutely, and for the administration of *Confirmation*, with certain rare exceptions) the Episcopal order is necessary. For *Extreme Unction* too the use of oil blessed by a



bishop is necessary. In Baptism any rational human being can act as minister; in Holy Matrimony the "ministers," strictly speaking, are the contracting parties, though by recent legislation the presence of the parish priest is, as a matter of fact, also necessary.

Next, therefore, the Hierarchy must be considered.

All Priesthood, it is taught, comes from Jesus Christ, who is alone the Supreme and Absolute Priest. But He has raised men to be not only His representatives, but actually the agents by whom that "Melchisedech" priesthood is exercised on earth. He conferred this gift upon His Apostles at the Last Supper, and gave them also the power of passing it on to their successors, under certain restrictions and safeguards: and this Priesthood includes primarily the power to offer the sacrifice of the Mass by consecrating the Eucharist, as well as the power to forgive sins in His Name, to bless, and to administer other means of grace.

There are seven orders in the Hierarchy. First the three *Major Orders*; the *Priesthood* (which in its plenitude is present only in the Episcopate), the *Diaconate*, and the *Subdiaconate*: then the four *Minor Orders*; the offices of *Doorkeeper*, *Reader*, *Exorcist*, and *Acolyth*. The reception of the "tonsure," by which a man becomes an ecclesiastic or "clerk," precedes that of the *Minor Orders*, but is not an order in itself. Now the four *Minor Orders* do not necessarily preclude a man from returning to ordinary lay life in the world: he remains always an ecclesiastic, but he is not bound to wear ecclesiastical dress or to remain unmarried. Usually however, in our own days, the reception of *Minor Orders* is but a preliminary to the *Major*; and when the *Subdiaconate* has once been received it is impossible without a special dispensation, exceedingly difficult to obtain, to return to lay life. Hencefor-



ward the man is bound to be a celibate, to say the Divine Office every day, and to dress as an ecclesiastic. (A slightly different discipline prevails, however, in the Churches of the East that are in communion with Rome, by which a married man may become a priest, although a priest may never marry.)

It is by this Hierarchy therefore, governed locally by bishops, and supremely by the Pope, that the dispensing of grace, the preaching of the faith, and the preserving of the Tradition undefiled, are effected ; and it is an essential of the Catholic Religion that this should be so. It is indeed possible for souls who, without their own fault, are unable to have access to a priest (whether that inability is virtual or physical), to obtain from God direct all necessary graces. An act of " perfect contrition," for example, removes the guilt even of mortal sin without the ministry of a priest, under such circumstances ; and it is exactly for this reason that the Church never presumes to declare the final fate of any individual soul outside her pale, since God only can know the dispositions of such a soul. Persons may, that is, belong to the " Soul " of the Church who, for no fault of theirs, have been excluded from the " Body." Yet wilfully to reject the ordinance of Christ—to refuse Baptism or Penance, for example, when the Institution by Christ of these sacraments is known and their efficacy recognized—is to forfeit all claim on obtaining in other ways the graces conferred by them ; to lose their place in the " Soul " of the Church as well as in the " Body."

Besides sacraments, however, for which the Priesthood is essential, it must be noticed that the Church uses and recognizes other means of grace.

First, there are those things or rites which she calls *Sacramentals*, resembling the Sacraments in their double nature, as well as in the fact of their conferring



grace (though, theologically speaking, in a slightly different mode), yet not instituted by Christ Himself. Such a sacramental is *Holy Water*. *Holy Water* is water, with a small infusion of salt, blessed by a priest in virtue of his general powers to bless, and used by the faithful for the purifying away of lesser stains of guilt, for their protection against spiritual assaults, and for the disposal of their mind towards Divine things. Blessed ashes and palms are other examples of sacramentals; and all these depend for their efficacy not only on the blessing that they have received, but on the fervour and the disposition of those who use them.

Next, there is *Prayer*, or the lifting up of the heart to God with attention and intention, whether the aspirations are vocally expressed or not. And there is perhaps no department of the Catholic system more minutely or exhaustively treated than is that of Prayer.

Prayer is of two main kinds. First, there is *Vocal Prayer*, especially that form of Vocal Prayer stereotyped in the Mass and in the Divine Office. All Religious and all ecclesiastics above the rank of Sub-deacon are bound under pain of mortal sin to "recite office," except where special exemptions are given to the illiterate or to those otherwise physically or morally incapable of fulfilling the obligation. So high is the value attached to this exercise that among monks it is called *Opus Dei*—The Work of God—and is the supreme duty of their daily life. Further, it must be said aloud, or, in the case of private recitation, with at least the deliberate movement of the lips; and, in Enclosed Houses, it forms the chief occupation of every day: a large proportion of it is recited, in choir, in such houses during the hours of the night. Secondly, there is *Mental Prayer*, rising at last into *Contemplation*; and this,



though practised widely by the faithful everywhere, reaches, as a rule, its perfection only in Religious Houses, where its cultivation is brought to the highest possible pitch. In one Order, for example, only partially "enclosed," Mental Prayer or Meditation on the subject of the Passion of Christ is enjoined on all members for two hours every day.

Lastly, the Church regards as means of Grace all good actions done with a pure intention to God's glory ; and she names the principal of these, *Spiritual* and *Corporal Works of Mercy*.

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So far the Catholic Religion has been described in a few of its barest essentials only : and it need hardly be said that a vast number of doctrines and practices—corollaries even further detached from those that have been mentioned—have not been touched upon at all. Such are the Church's teaching upon eschatology, beyond what has already been said, devotion to Mary and the Saints, the "Religious Life" in general, the place of Miracles, together with a less formal consideration of the system of faith and life as a whole. It will perhaps be better to treat of these now, separately. Their connection with what has already been said will easily be seen.

## 1. ESCHATOLOGY

It has been remarked that the Catholic recognizes but one probation here on earth, closing with the "Particular Judgement" that takes place immediately after death ; and but two final states or places to which the individual Soul can come. Yet he recognizes a third intermediate state, not final, through which the vast majority of souls who are, later, to attain the Beatific Vision must pass. This place is



named *Purgatory*; and in Purgatory the *temporal* debt due for forgiven sin is paid, as well as the punishment for venial sins in which the soul has left the body.

For the forgiveness of mortal sin (as in *Penance*, for example) does not, obviously, involve the remission of all penalty. A drunkard, for instance, who turns from his sin and is forgiven, does not, as a matter of fact, receive his health back again immediately. The *guilt* is forgiven; there is no longer, that is to say, any obstacle between his soul and God; he is restored to the life of grace; and the eternal punishment due to him becomes merely temporal. It is conceivable therefore, and indeed practically certain, that many souls whose sins have been few and whose sufferings many, pay that debt in this life, and do not, therefore, go to Purgatory. But with the vast majority of souls the case is not so. Many *spiritual* sins, for instance, have little or no perceptible penalty attached to them in this life. Such sinners as these, therefore, as well as those whose sins are out of all proportion to their sufferings, pay the balance due to such sins in the pains of Purgatory.

Two practical corollaries follow from this dogma.

First, there follows the utility and the duty of praying for the departed that they may be purged from their pains quickly and pass to their eternal joy; and for this purpose also the Sacrifice of the Mass is offered for them on earth. For if, as Catholics believe, intercession avails with God, in such a way that the pleading of a soul in grace, on behalf of another, helps and forwards that other soul while still on earth, so too will it avail for souls departed.

Secondly, there follows the doctrine of *Indulgences*—a doctrine that has given rise, probably, to more misunderstanding than any other, yet one



that is perfectly consistent and inevitable, if the Catholic teaching on Sin and its penalties, and on the common supernatural life enjoyed by the baptized, is once understood.

Briefly the doctrine is as follows :

A soul that has sinned and has been restored to grace yet owes, as has been said, a temporal debt to God ; and this temporal debt is, for the most part, paid only in Purgatory. Now all that such a forgiven soul is obliged to do, if she would enter heaven, is to remain in the "state of grace" while still on earth. If then she does more than she is obliged ; if she undertakes, let us say, some heroic work for the poor or the suffering ; if she strips herself, for the love of God and in reparation for her sins, of her temporal possessions ; if she devotes herself to austerity and prayer—it is quite certain that such efforts and reparations on her part must count before a Just God as payment of her debt ; and such is of the more value before Him, as she undertakes such acts voluntarily and lovingly.

Now the whole doctrine of Indulgences is, in its essence, nothing more than a systematization of this very reasonable idea. The Church runs to help, so to speak, a generous soul such as this, and not only directs her in her efforts and gives her special aids and privileges, but further, showers upon her a portion of the superabundant merits of all souls, from the Soul of Christ downwards, who, like her, have done far more than their absolute duty obliged them to do. For so deep and intimate is the interior union between soul and soul in grace, and so authoritative the commission uttered to the Church by Christ to the effect that what she "binds on earth shall be bound in heaven," that the Catholic Church claims to have a kind of "impetratory" authority over such transactions, and to be able to



help one soul that is struggling heroically and lovingly upwards, by the merits of other souls that have striven yet more heroically and lovingly in the past.

The "Treasury of Merits" is the phrase used of that vast community of meritorious actions and lives which is placed, in a sense, at the disposal of Christ's Representative and Vicar on earth.

It is hardly necessary to add, then, that "Indulgences" (that is, a remission of future Purgatorial pains) can only be gained by souls that are not only in grace, but in the possession of good and fervent dispositions.

## 2. DEVOTION TO MARY AND THE SAINTS

When once the doctrine of the Incarnation is grasped, as well as that of the Virgin-Birth of Christ, devotion to the Mother of God is seen to be inevitable. And it is extremely significant that where this devotion ceases, sooner or later the doctrine of the Incarnation grows obscure or is even denied. In fact, the use or the disuse of the phrase "Mother of God" is a tolerable guide to the more fundamental doctrinal belief of those concerned, since the phrase is, to the Catholic, nothing but a simple statement of the Divinity of Mary's Son.

(i) Now devotion to Mary, and dogmatic statements as to her Person and office and attributes, are matters of extremely careful and well-tested theology. They are very far from being, as is sometimes thought, the result of popular and rhetorical sentiment. Their origins are found, for example, in the Church of the Catacombs, at which period she was depicted in the attitude of intercession, and given the title of "Advocatrix." Parallels were also drawn, in very early days, between Mary the Mother of the Redeemed and Eve the mother of the fallen. By the disobedience of the one the way



was made open for the first Adam to ruin the race at the Tree of Death ; by the obedience of the other the way was made open for the second Adam to redeem the race at the Tree of Life : and all subsequent "Marian" theology takes its rise and form and is limited by her function as an "Assistant," so to speak, of Redemption, not as a source of Redemption. It is not believed by Catholics that Mary is more than this ; she can intercede, but she cannot, strictly, "give" ; there is offered to her a veneration higher than that offered to any other creature, since she stands towards God, in virtue of her Motherhood and of the privileges He has given her, in an absolutely unique position ; yet this veneration never approaches and never can approach, even when offered by the simplest and most uneducated believer, that supreme and unique adoration which is offered to God alone. It is not only that Sacrifice is offered to God alone ; there is also another kind of prayer—the outcome of the relation of the Creature towards the Creator—which is given to God and to God only. All the rhetoric of the lovers of Mary, all the devotions performed in her honour, all the sounding titles bestowed on her with or without authority—these can no more be taken to imply an assertion of her Divinity, than the adding together of finite numbers can attain to infinity.

(ii.) Following upon this devotion to Mary comes devotion to the Saints and Angels, and, most of all, towards those Saints more intimately associated with the event of the Incarnation—such persons, for example, as St. Joseph, Spouse of Mary Ever-Virgin, and St. John the Baptist, the Forerunner of Christ. Devotion to these is natural and inevitable, for the same reason as to Mary, though all the honour paid to them can never equal that paid to the actual Woman of whom God Incarnate was born, and who,



as Catholics believe, was specially prepared for her high destiny by being conceived in the womb free from the taint of original sin. There is, in fact, no difference in kind between the honour given to such saints as St. Joseph or St. John the Baptist and the honour given to those later and other friends of God who, by the sentence of canonization, are declared certainly to have attained the Beatific Vision, and to be proper objects for the veneration of the faithful.

For, to Catholics, the grace of God is as powerful as ever, and the stream of "saints" therefore can never cease. There always have been, and always will be, souls that live lives so heroic, for motives so pure, as to merit this title. Some few of these are detected by the Church, and, at some period after their death, are publicly proclaimed, after an exceedingly searching inquiry, to have reached the technical standard of "sanctity": the vast majority, no doubt, succeed in evading the honours from which their humility would naturally shrink.

It is to souls that have been publicly proclaimed as "saints" that public veneration may be paid, though privately any Catholic may invoke the prayers of any soul or even of all the "holy souls" in Purgatory: and this public veneration is, of course, in a line with the whole main thought of Catholicism in which the *Humanity* of Christ, and not merely His Divinity, is believed to be the instrument of Redemption. Once again it is directly from the full Catholic doctrine of the Incarnation that the veneration of saints springs, since by the Incarnation man is united to God potentially, and by the sanctity of the individual this potentiality becomes actual. It is then merely as from intercessors and advocates that Catholics seek the assistance of the saints, not as from men who have become part of the Deity, and who therefore merit Divine honours.



### 3. THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

The life known as "Religious" is a life fundamentally based upon the three vows of *Poverty*, *Chastity*, and *Obedience*; and these three vows form the basis of every strictly "Religious" Rule. By *Poverty* the monk relinquishes his right over all earthly possessions, so that not even his clothes or books are his own; by *Chastity* he vows himself to a single life, and further increases, under penalty of "sacrilege," any future infringement of the law of perfect purity, whether in thought, word, or deed; by *Obedience* he resigns his own will into the hands of his Superior, and can no longer direct his future except so far as his Superior permits. It is necessary to add, however, that this obedience extends, of course, only to matters that are "indifferent" from a moral point of view.

All technically "Religious" persons, therefore, whether men or women, are bound alike by these vows. Differentiation begins after that point.

Roughly speaking, there are two kinds of "Religious"—Active and Contemplative; of whom the former are very much in the majority. "Active" Religious, although their lives contain plenty of devotion, and indeed are deliberately built upon it and conditioned by it, yet engage in all kinds of outward work—preaching, teaching, study, literature, as well as manual labour, among the men; teaching, nursing, needlework, and manual labour among the women. And such are enabled, of course, owing to their community of life and the complete absence among them of separate individual interests, to compete with secular organizations, very frequently to the disadvantage of the latter. "Contemplatives," however, engage in no such activities; and such books as they may occasionally produce, or



such manual labour as they may undertake, are merely recreations or by-products of a life whose sole object is prayer, austerities, and intercession.

Now these latter "Religious"—such communities as those of the Carthusians or the Cistercians or the Poor Clares or the Carmelites—are a continual source of bewilderment to such as either do not believe in the principles of Atonement and Prayer or have not thought out such principles to their logical end. For Catholics—unlike most Protestants—do not believe that the Sacrifice of Christ is just a detached and solitary event in history, but rather the type or norm of all sacrifice, as well as the supreme Act which fructifies all human pain and effort voluntarily embraced for the love of God and of souls. It is the object of every Contemplative to be "crucified with Christ"; in the cell of every Carmelite nun hangs an empty cross to remind her that she too must take her place upon it; the scourge of Christ's Passion is a fact in her daily life; and all Contemplatives alike, both men and women, regard it as the one object of their desire, to which all else is subordinated, to suffer in union with Christ, to add their blood, their tears, and their prayers to His, and so to extend the Passion He suffered in His Natural Body in that Mystical Body of His of which they are members. And they find that supreme honour with which the Church regards them corroborated by the words of Christ Himself, who, with the sisters Martha and Mary before Him, the first ministering actively to Him, the second contemplating Him, preferred the second, saying that Mary "had the one thing needful," and that she, and not Martha, had "chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her."

Finally, it must be remembered that it has been chiefly among Enclosed Religious, though by no



means exclusively among them, that the elaborate Science of Mystical and Ascetical Theology has been brought to maturity. It is impossible, of course, to do more here than merely name this enormous branch of the Catholic Religion, since its ramifications and significances have deeply affected not only all other branches of divinity—Moral and Dogmatic Theology, Exegetics, and the rest—but have helped to shape even the simplest prayers of the smallest child. Such men as St. John of the Cross, Tauler the Dominican, the unidentified author of the *Imitation of Christ*, such women as St. Teresa and St. Gertrude—these, in their explorations into the darkness that unites God and the soul, have done perhaps more to light up the mysteries of the interior life, and to sketch out for the pilgrim-soul—usually under terms of the three great stages of “Purgation,” “Illumination,” and “Union”—the road by which the Deity must be approached, than all the psychologists and the loud-voiced preachers put together.

#### 4. MIRACLES

The Catholic, so far as he realizes his faith, lives always in direct consciousness of the supernatural. To him the world of natural law in which he lives is not the only world; the double nature of the sacraments and of the sacramental or symbolical acts which he is continually performing; the “acts” of Faith, Hope, and Charity he is continually making—his whole religious life, in fact, drives him behind every external action to its “intention,” behind the things that are seen to the things that are not seen, behind the range of the natural laws by which this world is ruled to that illimitable range of supernatural laws of which he knows comparatively little.

The manifestation of the supernatural then is more



or less taken for granted. Once the miraculous nature of the Incarnation becomes an object of faith ; once he realizes that the Divine Being has so far intervened in the world as to become Man and to indicate His Presence by the shower of miracles recorded in the Gospels, it is no longer a matter of surprise to him, but merely one of evidence (in each instance) that the Divine and Supernatural Power of God should continually, as Christ Himself promised (not infringe the laws of nature, but), intervene by laws still greater. It is not an infringement of the law of gravitation to lift a book from a table ; neither is it an infringement of the laws of nature to bring a higher supernatural law to bear upon natural conditions.

The phenomena of Lourdes, therefore, or the countless miracles recorded in the lives of the saints, are no bewilderment to the Catholic. Rather he would be bewildered if these evidences of God's supernatural action upon earth were ever to cease. In the Mass, which the devout Catholic hears every day, there is offered to his faith a continually re-enacted miracle by which the Human Nature assumed by God becomes present, whole and undivided, on ten thousand altars simultaneously, in every country of the world. He believes this firmly and unfalteringly ; it is scarcely a matter of surprise, therefore, that when Jesus Christ, hidden in His Sacrament, goes by the couches of the sick at Lourdes, the infirm should leap from their beds, the blind should recover their sight, and the deaf hear, as they did in Galilee and Jerusalem long ago.

It may be that sometimes he is over-credulous, and believes on quite insufficient evidence that a miracle has taken place ; yet it must be remembered in his defence that it is only natural that he should be satisfied with far less evidence for such an incident



than can be one who finds it difficult, if not impossible, to believe in the supernatural at all, and to whom a demonstrated miracle would mean the overturning of all his previous philosophy.

Finally, it should be noted that in ordinary processes of canonization at least two "first-class" miracles must be proved, after very searching inquiry, following upon the act or the intercession of the subject of the process, before the case has a chance of going forward.

It remains to end with a general review of the whole place and significance of Catholicism in its claim to be not merely one of the world-religions, but the single Religion revealed by God as true.

(1) First, it should be remarked that Catholicism has a history behind it of unique interest. It arose in the East, or rather at the juncture of East and West; it has laid hold first of the West, in such a sense that the whole of the most progressive civilization of the world has been shaped by it; and it is at present beginning to lay hold of the East in a way in which no Western Religion has ever succeeded in doing; in a way in which no Eastern Religion has ever affected the West. And it claims further to possess, as evidenced by its zeal for proselytism, a kind of Divine Self-consciousness which, as manifested originally in the Person of Christ, has been always regarded by Christians as the supreme indication of His Divinity.

(2) Its action upon civilization has been—as its Founder predicted in His parable of the Kingdom of Heaven as "leaven hid in meal"—one of intense stimulus. A brilliant book, dealing with this very modernly conceived point, has been written by Mr. Charles Devas under the title *The Key to the World's Progress*. Catholicism has produced, that is to say, an extraordinary kind of ferment, driving up, so to



speak, out of the seething mass every kind of individual. It has produced on the one side such Saints as St. Francis of Assisi, St. Teresa, St. Ignatius of Loyola ; and, on the other hand, by a kind of reflex action, such monstrous enigmas as Alexander VI., Gilles de Rais, and Henry VIII. have made their appearance in the midst of Catholic society. It has been the occasion of massacres as well as of monasteries ; countries under its influence have known in one generation a flood of contemplatives, and in the next the appalling phenomenon of the "Black Mass" and Satanism—forms of worship only possible to those who believe truly that Christ is God and that the Blessed Sacrament is Christ, even while they insult Him. Catholicism has been indeed, as Christ predicted, a very "fire" in its wrath and energy, as well as in its pure radiance and light.

(3) Yet, between these vibrating extremes, it is the claim of Catholicism that it is exactly fitted to the needs of the Average Man. On the one side there stand ranged the Saint, the Theologian, the Philosopher, the Scientist, the Philanthropist—Giants of Love and Wisdom and Pity ; on the other the Criminal, the Little Child, the Irish Labourer—these little accounted of (when they are not altogether repudiated) in the kingdom of this world. St. Thomas Aquinas and the little school-girl ; Pasteur and the dunce ; St. Francis and the Sicilian brigand—all these believe, at any rate, exactly and precisely the same dogmas, down even to the minutest detail of their Faith. *There is no esotericism in the Catholic Church.* It was the proclamation of St. Paul the Apostle that in Christ veils were to be done away and mysteries revealed. There is no slow process of initiation, no secret knowledge possessed by a Hierarchy. The Doctor can know scarcely more than the Penny Catechism can tell him ; the child scarcely less.



Yet between these extremes of attainment stands the Average Man—the man with spiritual spasms of enlightenment and long periods of obscure inertia, the man of few and feeble aspirations and endlessly broken resolutions, of glimpses of realization and disillusionment and carnal entanglements and materialistic stupidities. And it is the claim of Catholicism that to this man, as well as to others higher or lower in the scale, the Catholic Religion is exactly fitted.

For it gives him first a distinct and comprehensible scheme of the Universe, with a sense of his own personal responsibility to his Creator. There is a Personal God whom he is taught to call his Father ; a God who has become his Redeemer by becoming his Brother and fellow-sufferer, and who will become his Judge ; a God who is present always in his heart and speaks through conscience. He has been brought into filial relations with this God through an act performed at a definite place and time—his Baptism ; and he is provided with sacramental actions, which he is to perform under strict orders and conditions, which will enable him to preserve these relations and to restore them if they are infringed. He is not, that is to say, driven back upon his own emotions, and his yet more fallible memory of these emotions, for reassurance and strength. Times, places, actions are all prescribed. He is not forced inwards to find his God : his God, and a God dwelling in Human Nature too, awaits his worship in every Tabernacle, and offers Himself continually as a sacrifice under circumstances which, by discipline, drive His worshipper to meet Him. And these observances and rites are not mere symbols or reminders of truth, but Truth's utter Realities.

Yet the emotional and the intellectual elements are not wanting. The Average Man is met by a ceremonial which for sheer beauty and symbolism is



unsurpassed in the history of religion, by appeals to his sense of beauty, such as it is—by liturgy, by music, by ordered movement and rhythm—that can hardly fail to raise his mind to the Absolute Perfection which he worships. And as for the intellect, Sunday by Sunday, if he does his duty, he has offered to him in sermons, and in his daily reading, a scheme of theology hammered and tested by the shrewdest and holiest brains in Europe as well as inspired by the subtleties of the East—so hammered and tested and inspired, in fact, as to evoke the reproach that it is too logical to be true. Yet he is not bound to know all this theology unless he has a taste for it. It is enough for him to say with the French charcoal-burner, “I believe all that the Church believes,” and then, after a pause, “And the Church believes what I believe.”

This then is perhaps that claim on behalf of Catholicism which is most likely to be heard in these days of democratic tendencies. There are a thousand other arguments advanced by the Church in her own cause—the fulfilment of prophecy from the Old Testament and from the New; her miracles; her saints; the indications of philosophy; the growing corroborations of Science; the Supra-national Unity which she has succeeded in establishing among her children, in opposition to the fact that other religious communities have failed, always and consistently, to bring about theological unanimity even on a far smaller basis; her unbroken descent through the ages. Yet in this age perhaps she may be discerned more easily in her relations to the Average Man, and her claim to be the One Church of God judged more fairly when tested by her effects upon him. And, indeed, it is harder to think of any better criterion in any age.



## CATHOLICISM AND THE FUTURE <sup>1</sup>

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BY THE VERY REV. MGR. ROBERT HUGH BENSON, M.A.

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THERE are two sharply defined views as to the significance of what is called "modern religious thought." The first—that of the thinkers in question—is that it marks the beginning of an epoch, that it has immense promises for the future, that it is about to transform, little by little, all religious opinion, and especially such opinions as are called "orthodox." The second view is that it marks the end of an epoch, that it is of the nature of a melancholy process at last discredited, that it is about to be re-absorbed in the organism from which it takes its origin, or lost in the sands of time. Let us examine these two points of view.

The modern thinkers take their rise, practically, from the religious upheaval of the sixteenth century. At that period of Christendom the establishment of the principle of Nationalism in religion struck the first blow against the idea of a final revelation guaranteed by an infallible authority; for the substitution, as a court of appeal, of a written Book for a living voice could only be a transitional step towards the acceptance by each individual, in whose hands the Book is placed, of himself as interpreter of it. Congregationalism followed Nationalism, and Individualism (or pure Protestantism) Congregationalism; and since both the Nation and the Congregation disclaimed absolute authority, little by little there came into existence the view that "true religion" was that system of belief which

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from *The Atlantic Monthly* for August, 1910, by kind permission of the author and of the editor.



each individual thought out for himself; and, since these individuals were not found to agree together, "Truth" finally became more and more subjective; until there was established the most characteristically modern form of thought—namely, that Truth was not absolute at all, and that what was true and imperative for one was not true nor imperative for another. Further, the original acceptance of the Bible as containing Divine Revelation became itself modified by internal criticism and the discoveries of external science, until at the present day we find "modern religion" practically to consist in an attitude of mind, more or less Christian in sentiment, though often indignantly claiming the name; in an ethical system and a belief in progress toward an undefined and only gradually realizable goal, rather than in an acceptance of a series of historical events and of dogmas built upon them.

On the other side stands that body of opinion represented by the Catholic Church, whose tenets are as they have always been—involving, and indeed founded upon, the idea that theology is not, as are the other sciences, merely progressive and inductive, but is rather the working out, under divine guarantees, of a body of truth revealed by God two thousand years ago.

We find then at the present day two mutually exclusive views of the future of religion. To the "modern thinker" it appears certain that the process begun almost instinctively in the sixteenth century, justified as it seems to be by the advance of science and criticism, will continue indefinitely, to the final destruction of the other view. To the Catholic it appears equally certain that the crumbling of all systematic authority down to that of the individual, and the impossibility of discovering any final court in Protestantism to which the individual will bow, is the death sentence of every attempt to find religious truth outside that infallible authority to whose charge, he believes, truth has been committed. The view of the writer of this paper is emphatically the second of these two.

That the "modern system" has accomplished great



things and made important contributions to thought, is of course obvious. Much of the useful work that has been done recently, especially in the direction of popularizing science, as well as of correlating discoveries and compiling statistics, particularly in the sphere of comparative religion, has been done by these independent thinkers. But they have injured their own usefulness by assuming an authority which, by their own profession, they repudiate ; and by displaying an almost amazing ignorance of the significance of certain enormous facts, and even of the existence of the facts themselves. Let us enumerate a few.

It is usually assumed by the members of this school that the Catholic Church is the discredited Church of the uneducated. It appears to be their opinion that Catholics consist of a few Irish in America and a small percentage of debased Latins in Europe. They seem to be entirely unaware that a movement is going forward amongst some of the shrewdest and most independent minds in all civilized countries, which, if precedent means anything, implies as absolutely sound the prediction of Mr. H. G. Wells that we are on the verge of one of the greatest Catholic revivals the world has ever seen.

When men in France like Brunetière, Coppée, Huysmans, Retté, and Paul Bourget, come forward from agnosticism or infidelity ; when Pasteur, perhaps the most widely known scientist of his day, declares that his researches have left him with the faith of the Breton peasant, and that further researches, he doubts not, would leave him with the faith of the Breton peasant's wife ; when, in Great Britain, an Irish Protestant Professor of Biology, a Professor of Greek at Glasgow, and perhaps the greatest Judge on the bench, in the very height of maturity and of their reputation, deliberately make their submission to Rome ; when, within the last few months, the Lutheran Professor of History at Halle follows their example ; when two of those who are called "the three cleverest men in London," not only defend Catholicism, but defend it with the ardour of preaching friars ; when, in spite of three centuries of Pro-



testantism, enforced until recently by the law of the land, the Catholic party in the English Parliament once more has the balance of power, as also it holds it in Germany; when, as is notorious, the "man-in-the-street" publicly declares that if he had any religion at all, it would be the Catholic religion; when a Papal Legate elicits in the streets of Protestant London a devotion and an hostility that are alike the envy of all modern "leaders of religious thought," and sails up the Rhine into Cologne to the thunder of guns and the pealing of bells; when this kind of thing is happening everywhere; when the only successful missions in the East are the Catholic missions, the only teachers who can meet the Oriental ascetics, the Catholic ascetics—surely it is a very strange moment at which to assume that the religion of the future is to be some kind of ethical Pantheism!

Of course, all these phenomena are not for one moment advanced in support of the truth of the Catholic claim (beyond the fact that they do exhibit a power of recuperation in the Catholic Church which no other religious society has ever displayed in the history of the world), but they are at least a very grave indictment of the extraordinary and fantastic visionariness of the academic mind which professes to deal with facts rather than *a priori* assumptions. Certainly arm-chair thinking is one essential in the pursuit of knowledge, but at least facts must be taken to the arm-chair. Certainly there is in Individualism the truth that each man has a mind of his own, but unless that mind is exercised on objective phenomena as well as on its own inner consciousness, it will end in hopeless limitation, senility, and dreams. As Mr. Chesterton points out, the man who believes in himself most consistently, to the exclusion of cold facts, must be sought in a lunatic asylum.

A second criticism of "modern religious thought" is that it attempts to restrict to terms of a part of human nature that which is the affair of the whole of human nature; it tends to reject all evidence which is not the direct object of the intellect in its narrowest sense. Mr.



Arthur Balfour, in his *Foundations of Belief*, put the truth about the matter in a single sentence, to the effect that any system of religion which was small enough for our intellectual capacity could not be large enough for our spiritual needs. Professor Romanes traces the beginning of his return from materialism to Christianity to the discovery of that same truth. He had always rejected, he tells us, the evidence of the heart in his search for religious truth, until he reflected that without the evidence of the heart no truth worth knowing can be discovered at all. The historian cannot interpret events rightly unless he is keenly and emotionally interested in them; the sociologist cannot interpret events adequately unless he personally knows something of passion; and more than all this, the very finest instincts of the human race, by which the greatest truths are arrived at,—the principle of the sacrifice of the strong in the cause of the weak, for instance, all art, all poetry (and these are as objective as anything else), chivalry, and the rest,—all these things, with their exceedingly solid results in a thousand directions, could never have come into existence, much less have been formulated and classified, unless the heart had been followed, not only as well as the head, but sometimes even in apparent and transient contradiction to the head.

Now, modern religious thinkers are undoubtedly acute, but an acute point is more limited than a blunt one. They are acute, in that they dissect with astonishing subtlety that which they can reach; but they do not touch so many data as can a broader surface; and to seek to test all religion by a purely intellectual test, to refuse to treat as important such evidences as do not come within the range of pure intellect, is as foolishly limited and narrow-minded as to seek to deal with Raphael's Madonnas by a process of chemical analysis. I am not now defending mere emotionalism in attacking mere intellectualism; I am but arguing that man has a heart as well as a head; that his heart continually puts him in touch with facts which transcend, though they need not contradict, mere



reason ; and, with Romanes, that to neglect the evidence of the heart is to rule an eye-witness out of court because he happens not to be a philosopher or a trained detective. Man is a complex being whose complexity we name Personality ; and any system which, like religion, claims to deal with his personality must be judged by his personality, and not by a single department of it. If religion must be brought to the bar and judged, it is the sociologist, rather than the psychologist or the philosopher, who ought to wear the ermine ; for the sociologist, at any rate in theory, deals with the whole of man *en masse* and not merely with a selection of him. Our "modern thinkers" are not usually sociologists.

This, then, is the terrible and almost inevitable drawback of the specialistic or academic mind. It has studied so long one particular department of truth, that it becomes imbued with an *idée fixe* that there is no truth obtainable except in that particular department. Certainly these modern critics of supernatural religion are often learned men, and their names accordingly carry weight ; yet, in nine cases out of ten, just because of their special knowledge,—or rather because of the specialization of their knowledge, and their consequent loss of touch with life and thought as a whole,—they are far less competent judges of the claims of religion than are those men with half their knowledge but twice their general experience. "I have searched the universe with my telescope," cries the astronomer, "and I have not found God." "I have searched the human body with my microscope," cries the biologist, "and I have not found the soul." But did they really expect it ? "I have smelt Botticelli's Primavera, and I have detected no odour of beauty ; I have licked a violin all over, but I can find in it no passion or harmony."

So far we have glanced at a couple of very serious defects in the modern method ; but undoubtedly there are a great many more. For instance, these "modern thinkers" are perpetually assuming the attitude of standing



alone in the world as independent and impartial observers ; and there is nothing more disastrous than this for a searcher after truth. For none of us are independent or impartial for one instant, ever, anywhere. Each of us begins with a bias, partly temperamental, partly educative, partly circumstantial. Possibly we may succeed in changing our point of view altogether, certainly we all modify it ; but we all do, always, occupy some position from which we view the universe. You cannot observe a mountain unless you stand still ; and to stand still in one place implies the impossibility of standing still simultaneously in another place.

To take one example of the unhappy effect of not being aware of this very fundamental fact, it is only necessary to glance at biblical criticism. It is notorious that biblical critics who have renounced Christianity claim, above all others, to approach the Scriptures impartially ; but that is exactly what they do not do. They have already decided that the Christian interpretation of the Bible is untrue, that the Scriptures are merely the work of more or less acute or imaginative human minds ; and they therefore are obliged—of course unconsciously—to find evidence for their position. They discover, let us say, that in certain points there are apparent discrepancies in the accounts of Christ's resurrection. "You see," they say, "we told you so. The stories do not even agree." A little further on they discover minute and accurate agreement in the various accounts. "You see," they repeat, "it is just as we said. Obviously Matthew has copied from Mark."

Now, I do not desire to blame these critics for taking a biased and prejudiced view of the Scriptures, for I have no doubt that I do myself ; but they do deserve blame for pretending that it is not so ; and what is worse, their ignorance of their own prejudice is an absolute bar to their making allowance for that prejudice. To use an unpunctual watch is not necessarily to be an unpunctual man ; he only is unpunctual who is unaware that his watch is so. And further, in the particular example that



we have considered, the "impartial" thinker suffers under a yet further disadvantage, in that he is not vitally interested in what he studies (how can he be?). And not to be vitally interested is to be short-sighted. Only a lover can understand a love-letter; a father who watches his child drowning, or being rescued, sees more of what is happening, *ceteris paribus*, than another man who chances to be passing by. Love is not always blind; it is in nine cases out of ten far more clear-sighted than indifference, or even than philosophical interest.

To pass on, however, from mere criticism to more positive statement, it is necessary first to glance at the contributions of psychology to the controversy.

These "modern thinkers" rely to a large extent for their conclusions upon this very important and rapidly developing branch of science; and say, quite rightly, that no religious system can stand for the future which does not take into account the new discoveries in this direction. They further add that an enormous number of phenomena hitherto considered as sanctions and evidences of supernatural religion have at last been accounted for by a greater knowledge of man's own inner nature, and that the miracles hitherto advanced by Catholics in support of their claims can no longer bear the weight rested upon them.

There is of course a very solid argument underlying these assertions, but an argument which it would be impossible to discuss within the limits of this paper. There are one or two observations to make, however, which affect the weight of the argument very considerably.

Up to fifty years ago it was commonly asserted by thinkers who were at that particular date "modern," that the phenomena alleged by Catholics to have been manifested at certain holy places, or in the lives of holy people, simply did not take place and never had taken place, because miracles were, obviously, impossible. It was a magnificent and beautiful act of faith to make,—an act of faith since it rested upon an unproved negative principle,



and a universal principle at that,—but it was not science. For within the last fifty years it has gradually been discovered that the events did take place, and still take place, in every corner of the world. For example, the Church has observed for about two thousand years that every now and then a certain human being manifested every sign of being two persons in one, two characters within one organism; further, she observed that the use of very forcible and dramatic language administered by authority, if persevered in long enough, frequently, but not infallibly, had the effect of banishing one of these apparent personalities. She called the first phenomenon “Possession,” and the second “Exorcism.” I suppose that there was no detail of the Church’s belief more uniformly mocked than was this. Yet at present there is hardly a single modern psychologist of repute who is not familiar with these phenomena, and who does not fully acknowledge the facts. It is true that “modern thinkers” give other names to the phenomena—“alternating personalities” to the one, and “suggestion” to the other,—but at least the facts are acknowledged.

It would be possible to multiply parallels almost indefinitely. Communications made at a distance by other than physical means; phantasms of the living (called by the Church “bi location”), and of the dead; faith-healing; the psychical effect of monotonous repetition; the value of what the Church calls “sacramentals,” that is, of suggestive articles (such as water) in which there is no intrinsic spiritual value; even the levitation of heavy bodies; even the capacity of inanimate objects to retain a kind of emotional or spiritual aroma of the person who was once in close relations to them (as in the case of relics)—all these things, or most of them, are allowed to-day, by the most materialistic of modern thinkers, if not actually to be established facts, at least to be worthy of very serious and reverent consideration. When men like Sir Oliver Lodge, Professors Richet, Sidgwick, and Lombroso are willing to devote the chief energies of their



lives to the investigation of these things, it is hardly possible even for other scientists to dismiss them as nonsense.

Now, I am not concerned here with the discussion of the two main explanations given to these facts by Catholics on the one side, and "modern thinkers" on the other; for each explanation rests on a theory of the entire cosmos. The Catholic who is quite certain that a supernatural world, peopled by personalities, lies in the closest possible relations with this, is perfectly reasonable in attributing phenomena of this kind to those relations. The "modern thinker" who either does not believe in that supernatural world, or who thinks it indefinitely distant (whether in time or space), and is simultaneously absolutely certain that all the phenomena of this world arise from the powers of this world, is equally reasonable in his own superb act of faith. But it is surely very significant and suggestive to find that, whatever the theories may be, at least on the actual facts (professedly the particular province of the "modern thinker"), the Church has been perfectly right and the "modern thinkers" perfectly wrong; and that the Church has not only enjoyed through her "Tradition" (which is another word for continuous consciousness) wider and longer experience, but has actually been more accurate in her observation.

Is it so entirely unreasonable to think that, since she has been right in her facts, she is at least entitled to some consideration with regard to her interpretation of them? For, after all, the Church is not so absolutely idiotic as some of her critics appear to think. She too is really quite aware of the failings of human evidence, of the possibilities of deception, fraud, and error. Her theologians, too, perfectly realize that it is often extremely hard to discriminate between objective and subjective energy, as her rules for the testing of alleged miraculous events show quite plainly. Yet I would venture to assert that not one out of every ten of her psychologist opponents has ever heard of, much less read, the very sensible and



shrewd directions on these very points, laid down by Benedict XIV.

And if, finally, it could possibly be shown that the modern psychological theories are correct, and that these abnormal phenomena were, after all, produced by hitherto unknown powers in human nature, there would still remain for discussion the very grave question as to why it was that religion managed to control these powers when every scientific attempt to do so lamentably failed; why it is that even to-day "religious suggestion" can accomplish what ordinary suggestion, even under hypnotism, cannot; and how it is that certain undisputed facts brought about at Lourdes can only partly be paralleled, certainly not equalled, by all the psychological experimenters in the world. Allow, even, for the sake of argument, that the childlike and pathetic faith in nature, shown by so many infidel doctors in the face of these problems, will one day be justified, and that all the cures of Lourdes will be capable of classification under the convenient term of "law"; yet, even so, how is it that these doctors cannot, even now, reproduce the conditions of that "law" and the consequent cures? It is surely very remarkable that in this instance, as in so many others, things hidden from the "wise and prudent" are revealed to "babes"; and that the rulers and representatives of the "dark ages" managed, and manage, somehow or another, to control and use forces of which the present century of light and learning has only just discovered the existence.

Now, the facts mentioned are surely suggestive, not necessarily of the truth of the Catholic religion, but of the extreme likelihood that that religion, and not a benevolent Pantheism or Immanentism, is to form the faith of the future. Here is a religious society which is not only up to the present the one single religious force that can really control and unite the masses, but also the one single religious body with clear dogmatic principles which can attract at any rate a considerable selection of the most advanced and cultivated thinkers of the age.



It is the easiest thing in the world to become an Individualist; it is always easy to believe in the practical infallibility of one's self; one only requires the simple equipment of a sufficiently resolute contempt of one's neighbour; but it is not very easy to believe in the infallibility of some one else. That requires humility, at least intellectual. The craving for an external authority is not, in spite of a popular and shallow opinion to the contrary, nearly so natural to man as a firm reliance upon his own. Yet here the fact remains of this continuous stream of converts into the most practically and theoretically dogmatic society in the world, of converts who through their education and attainments surely should be tempted, if any were tempted, to remain in the pleasant paradise of Individualism and Personal Popery.

Next there is the consideration of the undoubted tendency of academic minds to be blind to all data except those which fall under the particular science to which they have devoted themselves; faced by the very sensible and Catholic way of treating man as a feeling as well as a thinking animal, and of taking into account in the study of truth, not only matters of dry intellect, but those departments of knowledge to which access can only be gained by the heart. Thirdly, we glanced at the extraordinary vindication that Catholic experience has received, at least with regard to facts, from the most modern of all modern sciences.

There remain, however, several other signs of the future which must not be disregarded.

Mr. Charles Devas, in his brilliant book *The Key to the World's Progress*, points out by an argument too long to reproduce here that, so far as the word progress means anything, it denotes that kind of development and civilization which only makes its appearance, and only is sustained, under the influence of Catholicism. He traces with great sociological learning the state of comparative coma in which "ante-Christian" nations seem always involved; the exuberance of life, for both good and



evil, that bursts up so soon as Catholicism reaches them (whether directly, as in the case of Africa and Spain, or indirectly, by imitation, as in the case of Japan); and the activities of corruption that, together with the dying impetus of the old faith, keep things moving, so soon as Catholicism is once more abandoned, as in the case of France. In regard to both virtues and vices, the ante-Christian, the Christian, and the post-Christian nations are clearly and generically distinguished. The object of his book is to indicate the strong probability of the truth of a religion which exhibits these effects; but it is also of service in indicating the probability that that same religion should accompany and inspire progress in the future as it has in the past.

A large and very significant detail in this process lies in the effect of Catholicism on the family. Not only are Catholics more prolific than other nations (directly in virtue of Catholic teaching on the subjects of divorce and race-suicide), but the Church also is the one body that resolutely regards the family, and not the state or the individual, as the unit of growth. And it is simply notorious that where the family is overshadowed by the state, as in the case of Sparta, or by the individual, as in the case of every really autocratic despotism, no virtues of patriotism or courage can avail to save the country from destruction. It seems astonishing that our modern arm-chair philosophers seem unaware of the significance of all this with regard to the future of religion.

Another sign of the times surely lies in the province of Comparative Religion. Our more recent researches have taught us, what the Church has consistently known and maintained, that there are great elements of truth common to all religions. Once more our modern theorists have leaped forward enthusiastically, and acclaimed the discovery of this very ancient fact as a proof that Catholicism is but one among many faiths, and no truer than the rest. "Here," they say, "are contemplation and asceticism in Buddhism; a reverence for the departed



among the Confucians; the idea of a Divine Redeemer in Mithraic worship; and sacramentalism among the American Indians." Very prudently they do not lay stress upon the eternal despair of Buddhism, the puerilities of the Confucians, or the religious brutality and materialism of the Indians. They select those elements of sanity and truth that are distributed among the various faiths of the world—those elements which appeal to *all men*, in some degree—and find in their diffusion an argument against the one faith that holds them all!

"Comparative Religion" has done, in fact, an enormous service to the claims of Catholicism. It has revealed to the world exactly that phenomenon which should be looked for, *ex hypothesi*, in a Divine Revelation, namely, that the creed which embodied that Revelation should contain, correlated and organized into a whole, all those points of faith of which each merely human system of belief can catch and reflect but one or two. For it is inconceivable that, if there is to be at any period of history a revelation from God, many points in that revelation should not have been anticipated, at least partly and fragmentarily, by groups of human minds for which, later, that revelation was intended. In rejecting Catholicism, then, our "modern thinkers" are rejecting not merely one Western creed, but a creed that finds an echo of nearly every clause, under some form or another (from the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity down to the use of holy water), in one or another of all the great world-religions that have ever controlled the eternal hopes of men. And yet our "modern thinkers" seriously maintain that the religion of the future is to be one which contains none of these articles of what is, diffusedly, practically universal belief!

One last indication of the future of Catholicism lies in its power of recuperation. Not only is it the sole religion which has arisen in the East and has dominated the West, and now once more is reconquering the East; but it is also the one religion that has been proclaimed as dead, over and over again, and yet somehow has always reappeared.



Once "the world groaned to find itself Arian"; now Arius is enshrined in the text-books, and the Creed of Athanasius is repeated by living men. Once Gnosticism trampled on the ancient faith everywhere; now not one man in a hundred could write five lines on what it was that the Gnostics believed. Once the Turks over-ran Africa and Spain and threatened Christendom itself; now the nations trained by Christianity are wondering how they can best dispose of Constantinople. Nero thought he had crucified Christianity in Peter; now Peter sits on Nero's seat. Once Elizabeth disembowelled every seminary priest she could lay hands on, and established Protestantism in Ireland. Now Westminster Cathedral draws immeasurably larger congregations than Westminster Abbey, where Elizabeth lies buried; and Catholic Irishmen are dictating in an English Parliament how the children in English schools are to be educated.

At every crisis in the history of Christendom—at the captivity of Avignon, the appearance of Luther, and the capture of Rome in 1870—it was declared by "modern thinkers" to be absolutely certain at last that Catholicism was discredited for ever. And yet, somehow or other, the Church is as much alive to-day as ever she was; and that, in spite of the fact that she is, in her faith, committed to the past and to doctrines formulated centuries before modern science was dreamed of.

Is there any other society in the world, secular or sacred that has passed through such vicissitudes with such a burden on its shoulders, and survived? For it is a burden which she cannot shift. She cannot, at least, "recast her theology" and drop unpopular or unfashionable dogmas (as can all sects which claim merely human authority), and yet live. Yet who can doubt that she is more of a force to-day than all the most accommodating denominations around her? She has lived, too, in the tumultuous rush of Western life, not in the patient lethargy of the East. She has struggled, not only with enemies in her gate, but with her own children in her own house. She



has been betrayed over and over again by the treachery or wickedness or cowardice of her own rulers; she has been exiled from nearly every country which she had nursed into maturity; she has been stripped in nearly every one of her lands of all her treasures; she has finally seen her supreme sovereign on earth driven to take refuge in his own house by the children of the men whom she raised to honour. And yet on her secular side she has seen every kingdom of Europe rise and fall and rise again; she has seen a republic give birth to a monarchy or an empire, and an empire yield to a republic; she has seen every dynasty fall except her own; she has seen, in religious affairs, every "modern" sect—whose one claim to efficiency lies in its modernity—fail to keep pace with herself who has the centuries on her shoulders; and she remains to-day the one single sacred and secular commonwealth which has faced the revolutions and the whirling religions of the West and has survived, with a continuity so unshaken that not one of her enemies can dispute it, and an authority which they can only resent; she reigns even in this day of her "discredit" over more hearts than any other earthly sovereign, and more heads than any philosopher of the schools; she arouses more love and obedience on the one side and more hatred or contempt on the other than the most romantic, the most brutal, or the most constitutional sovereign, sage, or thinker ever seen.

I called this characteristic of hers *Recuperation*. I call it now *Resurrection*, for this is the "sign of the Prophet Jonas" to which her Divine Founder appealed. And yet our "modern religious thinkers" are dreaming in their arm-chairs of another "creed"!



# THE CONVERSION OF ENGLAND<sup>1</sup>

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BY THE REV. R. H. BENSON, M.A.

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IT would hardly seem necessary in a paper on the Conversion of England to prelude what one proposes to say by an exhortation to desire that conversion; yet it may be questioned whether the slowness of the Church's progress towards that end does not at least partly spring from the timidity of her members toward desiring it seriously. There are two powers of our nature by which we desire an end—the imagination and the will—and we are too often apt to mistake the one for the other. We are liable to think that because we dream and sigh over the prospect of a Catholic England, because we close our eyes and depict to ourselves friars preaching in the market-places of Birmingham and Manchester, *Ave Maria* ringing from every parish church, Corpus Christi processions in Hyde Park, and the Benedictines singing the Divine Office in Westminster Abbey—that, therefore, we are truly desiring the conversion of our country. But romantic dreaming is not the same thing as efficacious desire; to desire a thing seriously is to will it efficaciously; and one of the marks of an efficacious will is to be eager to put theories into practice, to leap into every breach, to drive a wedge into every crack.

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted by permission, with a few alterations, from the *Ecclesiastical Review*, March, 1906.



Yet when we observe the lives of ourselves and our fellow Catholics, must we not confess that practically we are but too often content with a kind of devout sectarianism? We sigh, but we do not speak; we speak, but we do not shout; we hug ourselves in congratulations; we compare our sheltered garden with the wilderness beyond the hedge; we light our lamps and draw our curtains close; and if we think of the night outside it is only that we may sharpen our sense of warmth and comfort within.

Of course, we have a thousand excuses. It is perfectly natural that the long winter of penal laws should make us glad to have fire and light round which we may draw closely together, and afraid lest, when we open the door to go out, the storm should enter instead and blow out our candles and wreck our images. This is perfectly natural; but it is not supernatural. It is natural to be frightened; but it is not supernatural to yield to that fright. St. Augustine of Canterbury was afraid as he looked over the channel from France; but it was not until he had overcome that fear that he could even begin to preach Christ to the heathen.

It is natural that we should say that prudence is one of the Christian virtues; but it is supernatural to remember that fortitude is another of them; and that faith has a right to a kind of recklessness. It is natural to protest that Englishmen move slowly; but it is supernatural to be extremely discontented with that fact, and to be determined that they should move quickly instead. For, after all, the Spirit that came down at Pentecost declared Himself in the roaring elements of wind and fire; the still small voice is enough for the individual, but storm and conflagration are needed for the conversion of a nation.

The first essential, then, toward the Catholicizing of England is that we who are Catholics should seriously desire it; that this desire should be of a practical rather than a



theoretical nature; and that in the pursuit of it we should be willing to risk at least something on the promises of God Almighty.

As we look back at the history of the Church in our country, we are supplied with abundant illustrations of what I have been trying to say.

St. Augustine, as I have remarked, was undoubtedly most imprudent in displaying a silver cross and picture, and in singing a litany through the streets of heathen Canterbury. How far more tactful would he have been if he had been content with prayer on the Cœlian hill and pious aspirations that God would Himself tame the fierceness and instruct the ignorance of the wild English pagans! He would have been more tactful and more prudent; but he would not have converted England.

How exceedingly rash it was of the Society of Jesus to send such men as Blessed Edmund Campion and Father Persons, of the Seminaries to send their hot-headed young men across to England in the reign of Queen Elizabeth; and to urge them to go up and down through the country, preaching in barns and stables, offering the Holy Sacrifice in bedrooms and lobbies, and setting men's hearts on fire without the permission of the Government. How far more prudent it would have been to have come to some diplomatic understanding with Cecil and Walsingham, and to have refrained from annoying the Queen until she was safely secured upon the throne!

And again, how reckless of our Holy Father to have provoked the outburst of Protestant zeal in 1850, by the public re-establishment of the Hierarchy! And yet without these acts the Catholic religion would have practically ceased to exist in England by the reign of James I, and those of King Edward VII's subjects who had had the courage to pay spiritual allegiance to Rome, would still have been



worshipping God in small discreet chapels off the public thoroughfares, and would still be looked upon by their fellow countrymen in the manner in which, let us say, a duck-billed platypus would be regarded in a farmyard.

Always, in short, it has been the tendency of human nature to be content with what has already been gained, and to thank its own discretion that things are no worse; while it is the characteristic of divine grace to produce a divine discontent, and a determination to make things a great deal better.

Now the Catholic laity cannot evade responsibility by saying that all those things are in the hands of the bishops. Of course to a large extent they are in those hands; yet the attitude of the laity is one of those elements that cannot be set aside in the consideration of the larger policy. It would be the recklessness, not of faith but of human impatience, if violent measures were initiated from above, apart from the eager co-operation of the rank and file. It would be worse than foolish, it would be tempting God, if, let us say, the friars were sent in their proper habits to every town and village in England, unless Catholic laymen were prepared cordially to welcome them, even at the risk of a stone or two being thrown through their dining-room windows after dark. Of course, a great deal has already been done: last summer the friars did indeed go through the Kentish hop-fields with a small devoted company of laymen, although they went to minister to their own people, disavowing any intention of making proselytes; and the Guild of Our Lady of Ransom has also done a magnificent work in declaring in deed as well as in word and thought that the Catholic Church is Catholic and not sectarian.

Yet how much more remains to be done before we can congratulate ourselves that we are even beginning seriously to attempt the conversion of England! So long as it is



possible for one priest to boast publicly that he has never yet received one convert, or for another to sneer at what he calls "Anglican zeal," or for laymen to take delight in detecting what they call an "un-Catholic ring" in the sermons of convert clergy; so long are we bound to confess with shame that sectarianism has triumphed over the Christian spirit, and that while we talk magnificently of the conversion of England, we need something very like a further conversion ourselves.

Let us pass, however, from these more general considerations—from the contemplation of the ideal spirit of zealous charity—to reflect upon the details of our own dealings with non-Catholics.

The machinery at our disposal may be summed up under three heads, on the first two of which I propose to say very little, as their discussion would not be suitable in a paper of this kind.

The heads I have selected are *prayer*, *example*, and *controversy*.

Of prayer it would be improper to say anything beyond stating the platitude that it must be the root of all our efforts: for beyond what it accomplishes of its own objective power, it is the greatest safeguard against the spirit of personal virulence which has ever been the peril of all theological controversy. Prayer, too, in this cause is set before us by the authorities in the most emphatic possible manner—by the great organizations devoted to that object, and by such a practice as the giving of Benediction once a month with the same intention.

Of example also it is unnecessary to say much. It is superfluous to remind ourselves that Cæsar's wife must be above even suspicion; and that the members of the Bride of Christ are above all others scrutinized and watched in their personal life. It is no use to protest that we are all



sinners, that we all fall short of the standard set before us by the Catholic Church, and that the purity of her faith and the power of her Sacraments do not stand or fall by the response of her members. The world will yet persist in doing this: in judging of our Master's honour by our own; in testing the tree by its fruits. And we must remember too—what is at once a compliment and a grievous responsibility—that the world's standard for us is terribly high. A little while ago I gave a great shock to a woman of thirty whom I was instructing in the Catechism, by telling her that the Church was human as well as divine, that all Catholics were not saints, that even priests had their faults and weaknesses. I had to spend at least five minutes before she was at her ease again, in reiterating what I had previously said on the Church's divine mission. Yet neither must we avoid the scrutiny; it is our business as Catholics to have no secrets, no private chamber into which we may retire and relax ourselves, no severe and lofty mask to wear in public and lay by in private. We must meet Protestants on every possible occasion, admit them at all hours and under all circumstances, walk with them, ride with them, dance with them, shoot with them, and do our utmost to roll away the shadow of mystery with which their imagination still invests our private lives. We must get rid, then, of posing and play-acting; we must show an extreme simplicity and naturalness; we must make it evident that we can be both Catholics and patriots; that we can pray to our Lady and yet keep our word; go to confession and yet hate sin; use our rosaries and yet remain in possession of sanity and common sense—in short, that supernatural and natural virtues are not necessarily and always mutually exclusive.

We come, then, finally to controversy; and this is the principal subject of my present paper.



First, it is necessary to define the sense in which I use the word ; and I do so by saying that I mean by it all verbal dealings with Protestants on the subject of any part of the Catholic faith, whether by writings, lectures, or conversations. I have half a dozen things to say about it ; and I will say them as briefly as possible, although I feel very strongly that I have no right to speak, in view of my extremely limited experience. What I say, therefore, must not be taken as involving any kind of claim to the speaking of one who knows his subject from the Catholic side. Rather I am drawing upon my Protestant memories of methods that affected me for or against the Catholic Church, and upon a fairly wide acquaintance, both before and since my own conversion, with Anglicans who are still regarding the claims of Rome with a not unfavourable interest.

1. It appears to me that what is commonly called the controversial spirit is the surest means to defeat its own ends. There are two methods of subduing a rebellious country : the one is by fire and sword ; the other lies in the proclamation by heralds of its rightful king. And I have no hesitation in stating my own belief that for us, as for the Israelites outside the walls of Jericho, the latter is the only method that has any consistent promise of success.

In seeking to convert, say an Anglican, we may either attack his beliefs, run a sword through his interpretation of history, sneer at the divisions of the Establishment, cut at his phantom hopes of what he calls "Corporate Reunion," and denounce his holiest associations as deceptive and even diabolical ; or we may proclaim through trumpets the unity of the Catholic Church, the prerogatives of her head, the apostolicity of her doctrine, and the holiness of her saints. In other words, we may attack positively or negatively by declaring our principles or condemning his. And I feel no doubt at all in my own mind that the positive method is



better than the negative ; that it is better to preach our seven Sacraments than to denounce his two ordinances ; to invite to Rome rather than to fire guns against Canterbury and Exeter Hall.

I do not mean that the direct assault is not often necessary. It is impossible to engage long in controversy without leaving our own ground and entering that of our theological opponent. But approaching the whole subject generally, I believe that it is infinitely better to begin by proclamation rather than by denunciation, by promises rather than threats. Our friend will draw his own conclusions quickly enough ; it is impossible, for example, to talk half an hour with an intelligent Anglican without being asked for one's views on the orders of his clergy ; and then, of course, one must speak with the utmost definiteness. But it is far better that the blow should be invited rather than delivered spontaneously—that his question should precede our statement.

It is surely necessary, too, that we should be extremely careful as to the kind of words we employ in our controversy ; it is impossible not to perceive that many letters contributed, for example, to our Catholic journals by zealous and well-meaning writers, are sure to influence Anglican readers towards estrangement rather than sympathy. After all, points of view tell for a great deal in the selection of epithets. An Anglican High Celebration may be other than its promoters believe it to be, without deserving to be named a "parody," an "apish imitation," or a "laughable travesty"—words which implicitly suggest a conscious insincerity on the part of those who officiate in it ; a man may be mistaken and misinformed without thereby earning the title of "poor dupe." It is better, surely, to dwell on the reverent earnestness of mistaken worshippers, rather than to suggest that their mistake is the



result of deliberate guile. Let us remember that they do believe their service to be the Mass with all that that implies; and that from our own point of view, as well as from theirs, such persons are, as a matter of fact, spreading a knowledge of Catholic ceremonial and breaking down little by little in countless homes the fierce and unreasoning prejudice against the idea of external worship and sacramental truth which we too are labouring to overcome. There may be a few "apes" amongst them—they are the first to confess it—a few insincere or emotional play-actors—for such are to be found everywhere; but should we not thank God that there are so few, praise Him that of self-denying, sincere ministers and people there are so many, and pray to Him more and more to give them the substance for the shadow, the Visible Unity for their strange theory of it, and objective truth in addition to subjective conviction? Is not this better, and more likely to the attainment of our desires, than if we should spend our energy in smart phrase-making, clever cynicism, and unworthy sneers? They know our faith and what we think of them, well enough, without all that; is it not time that they should also be made aware of our hope and our charity in their regard? Of course this is not easy—self-restraint and patience are never so easy as hysteria and abuse—especially when such Anglicans are weak enough to turn and denounce us, and, themselves arrayed in long-forgotten apparels and Gothic chasubles, to sneer at lace and "fiddle-backs" and "Roman trumpery"; or, what is really serious, when they who do not even claim to enjoy more than six Sacraments, abuse us for what they call the "mutilation" of one; when they whose divisions and insubordination are the amazement of Christendom, profess to be jealous for episcopal authority—all this it is extremely difficult to bear with equanimity: but then we ought not to expect them to possess equal



graces with the children of the Kingdom ; we should make some allowances for the extreme discomfort of their position, and no more take offence at their abuse than should a mother resent the fractious unreasonableness of a feverish child. It should be the mark of Catholics, not that they can give as good as they get, or even better, but that even when reviled they revile not, when suffering they do not threaten nor retort.

2. My second point, which is touched upon in what I have just said, concerns the attitude which we should take up towards the motives of our theological opponents ; and I should urge with all my power that this should be as favourable as possible. Undoubtedly, there have been and are insincere non-Catholics ; but I cannot honestly say that I have ever met one whom I could confidently accuse of that appalling vice ; and I have not heard, from persons whose judgement I should trust, of more than half a dozen such, all told ; and certainly two of these were in circumstances in which I should exceedingly tremble to be placed. These were instances of clergymen whose sole source of revenue lay in the income of their living, who were too old to learn a profession, and who had a wife and family dependent on them. Before we blame even these over-much, we should honestly face the same prospect for ourselves by a vivid act of imagination. Picture yourself stepping out of your home in a week's time, penniless, nervously exhausted by interior struggle, possibly having alienated those dearest to you by a step which appears to them utterly mad and selfish, and dependent on charity not only for yourself but for those who have no share in the merit, though an equal burden of shame. On the other hand, let us remember with enthusiasm and applause the numerous instances where this misery has been faced gladly and courageously. One such occurs to my mind at this moment where the head of



the family threw up an important post, retired with his wife and children who despised and resented his action, tried to obtain the position of sacristan in a Catholic church, saying that he had lived all his life in what he had believed to be the House of God—and who finally failed even in this modest ambition, and failed cheerfully.

Let us then be extraordinarily careful of attributing bad faith to those who continue to disagree with us, and who prefer to stand on a platform that appears to us ludicrously insecure. Platforms, let us remember, do not display their weakness to those who occupy them, but to the critics who venture to examine the supports from beneath; and there are simply thousands of persons who, knowing intellectually all the premises which we can tell them, continue sincerely not only to distrust, but actually to deny the inevitable conclusions. "The supports are not cracked," they cry, "or they always have been cracked; or, if not, at any rate it does not matter, because the platform stands perfectly well without them; finally, cracks or no cracks, here we are where God set us, and here we will remain until we are buried in the ruins."

In this connection also let us remark that to certain kinds of noble souls an argument from chivalry appeals with far more insistence than an argument from reason. "We are here," they say, "under pitiable circumstances, abandoned by our bishops, distrusted by those of our own communion, deserted continually by friends whom we had learned to trust and admire. We resemble an outpost set to guard an almost indefensible position, yet in supernatural touch with the great army of Christ. Our foes are creeping on all sides, raking us with their fire; we have traitors and half-hearted combatants in our tiny body. It would be far easier for us either to throw down our weapons and go over to the enemy, or to make good our escape back to our own



camp while there is time—yet we have received no intelligible orders to retire. And it is surely better to hold on here desperately hoping against hope, ready for death or the ignominy of capture, rather than to take a step which may be prompted by self-interest or despair, and to abandon a position which our captain apparently desires us to defend.”

Now I am aware that the analogy is a ludicrously false one; it is so full of contradictions that it is not worth while to emphasize even one; and yet it is an analogy that is held and advanced by hundreds of sincere Ritualists. We may parley with them, point out their folly, prove the uselessness of their struggle, even shoot at them to the best of our power; but it ill becomes us to sneer at their gallantry. It should inspire us rather with the deepest respect and sympathy, and holy emulation.

While, therefore, we must not shrink from stating truths, let us avoid overstating them. Let us be frank, when necessary, in our opinions of their self-contradictory tenets, their misreadings of history, their doctrinal sins of commission and omission; but let us not presume to arrogate the power of God and profess to read their hearts; let us give them the utmost credit for sincerity and courage, and say as well as believe that the motives that underlie their action and inaction are often such as we should desire for ourselves in our own Catholic life.

And this brings me on naturally to my third point.

3. In dealing with non-Catholics, it is necessary to remember that scarcely two of them advance the same justification for their position. It is not in a serried line that they come against us, but rather after the manner of *franc-tireurs*; there is no uniform, no concerted plan; each man arms himself and fights as his own wisdom directs. It is, therefore, necessary for us, first of all, to



keep our tempers, and secondly to deal with every case individually.

For example, to treat Ritualists as if they regarded the Church of England to be exclusively the Church of Christ ; to treat the average cathedral dignitary as if he paid any serious attention to Catholic Christendom ; to treat the Low Churchman as if he thought himself bound to submit his private judgement to the Book of Common Prayer ; to treat the Broad Churchman as if he regarded the words of the Creed he professes as authoritative, or believed that right faith has anything whatever to do with eternal salvation—to approach any of these persons with preconceived ideas of an authority to which he must feel himself absolutely bound, is simply to fail at the outset.

Consider again the enormous cleavage between the Ritualist who appeals back to the primitive ages as containing the pure image of truth, and the Ritualist who, like ourselves in one respect, regards the Church as a living body in the present. To the one the Church is a statue carved by the hand of Christ, polished by the fingers of the Apostles, continually to be cleansed of lichens and accretions ; to the other she is a living organism, a monster indeed to our eyes, but to our friend's eyes fairer than the children of men. The two must be approached from absolutely different directions ; arguments that fall harmlessly on one, pierce cruelly to the heart of the other ; and yet to careless eyes their attitudes are identical. They both wear vestments, hear confessions, light lamps, and burn incense.

It is necessary for us, then, to pay at least some little attention to what they have to say for themselves, to understand what indeed is their position ; we must not be too quick to label them and pigeonhole them, and then to call them inconsistent and disingenuous when they protest



against the label, upset the ink, and struggle out from the hole in which we have lovingly placed them.

And, above all things, let us avoid patronage. I will acknowledge that this is exceedingly difficult to avoid. It is all so hopeless and dreary ; they are sometimes so complacent and yet so miserable, that the youngest among us is liable to pat them on the head and tell them they will be better soon if they will take their medicine like good boys and lie still. Yet, after all, they are often godly, righteous, and sober men, knowing perhaps even more facts and dates than are necessary for us to have acquired ; they are often scholars, and nearly always gentlemen ; and even for the lowest motives it is wise for us to remember these facts, and remind ourselves that the children of an Infallible Church are not necessarily themselves always infallible.

To add, then, yet one more metaphor before we leave this point, we must, as Cardinal Manning once said, play dominoes with our theological opponent. We must not meet a six with a four, or a two with a three, and then lose our tempers if he upsets the whole board in indignation. We must not advance the authority of Pius X to a lady who regards him as the Man of Sin ; we must not enlarge upon the learning of the Sacred College to a bootmaker, let us say, who has always identified the Cardinals with the sixth horn of the Dragon in the Apocalypse. We must go even further : we must not seek to prove the Immaculate Conception to one who has but the vaguest views on the Incarnation of our Lord and Saviour ; nor recommend the rosary or a novena to St. Philip of Neri to persons who would not repeat the Lord's Prayer twice in one day for fear of vain repetitions, and who are eager to prove our idolatry by a quotation to the effect that there is but "one Mediator" between God and man.

We must meet them rather on their own ground, and



lead them on from what they do know to what they do not, bringing them gradually step by step through the vale of misery, until they come within sight of Sion and of the gates of pearl.

Here, in spite of what I have hinted of release, I must touch on one more point before leaving this section.

There is one argument which, beyond all others, tends to hold men—especially Ritualists—back from submission to the Catholic Church. Let me state it in the kind of form in which it was put to me—and most eloquently too—before the initial work of faith was completely wrought in my soul.

“Here are you,” they said, “who have been living and practising as a priest for nine years in the Church of England. During that time you have said what both you and we have believed to be the Mass very many hundreds of times ; you have given and received also many hundreds of times what both you and we have believed to be sacramental absolution. You have experienced again and again in your heart divine consolations ; you have seen sinners again and again converted by this system that you are now on the point of repudiating, and you have watched them cleansed by the absolution you have given, and fed with heavenly bread from your hands, gradually edified in the Body of Christ and established in sanctity. And now you propose to call all this an illusion ; to declare that you have been no priest, that the words you said were unauthoritative and useless, except as an expression of your own private opinion ; that what you gave from the paten and chalice to those who hungered and thirsted after righteousness was nothing more than common bread and wine. If you can now distrust all the sensations and appearances of grace that flowed from your celebration and reception of our sacraments, how can you possibly



trust for a moment your new-found faith in him whom you call the Vicar of Christ? If you have been so utterly mistaken for nine years, indeed for over thirty years, why should you not be equally mistaken in the fancy you have now taken up for six months?"

Stated in this form, it is unnecessary to say that to many persons this appears an almost final argument. I know an eminent clergyman at this moment who says publicly that if he could ever bring himself to believe himself other than a Catholic priest, he would lose simultaneously all faith in Jesus Christ. I have known also many Catholics who, when confronted with this dilemma, have had nothing to offer but generalities about faith and confidence in God; and yet the answer is not very difficult, and has been already given by Cardinal Newman in a passage too long to quote here. But the gist of it is as follows:—

Anglicans are not required to repudiate their spiritual experiences, but only their intellectual conceptions. The theologians teach us that a perfect act of contrition wins forgiveness from God. St. Gertrude tells us that a fervent spiritual communion may be the means of receiving fuller grace than a lukewarm sacramental communion. Now there is no reason to think that contrition is an unknown virtue among Anglicans; nor the slightest reason to doubt that many thousands of them approach what they believe to be the altar of God, with a sincere love for their Saviour and a sincere desire to comply with His commands. With these premises, therefore, it is impossible to doubt that God rewards them with both grace and consolation; and we need not, therefore, label their emotions as deceptive, nor the moments of their holiest aspirations as triumphs of the devil's art. What they have to confess is, not that they were tricked into thinking God was with them when He was not, but only that they were wrong in their intellectual



interpretations of His Presence. They were right in thinking that at those moments they received a gift of grace. For it was at such moments that they made the greatest efforts to aspire to God. They were wrong in thinking that they received the gift *per sacramentum*. Their intellect, not their soul, was at fault.

I have ventured to treat this point at what may seem disproportionate length, as it appears to me extremely important that we should recognize how vital is the matter, and how real the difficulty; and should abstain from laying a greater burden on souls than we are authorized by the Church to lay.

4. It will save a great deal of time and irrelevant conversation if we will keep clearly in mind the real point in dispute. Now practically all men acknowledge, at least theoretically, the existence of some authority in matters of religion; this, among non-Catholics, will range from the ground of Scripture interpreted by the individual judgement, to that of what the Ritualist calls the "Catholic Church speaking through the agreement of its various branches"; but some such authority will always be found among those who accept the Christian Revelation at all. They will admit, that is to say, some standard or some interpreter by which that Revelation is proposed to men. On our side, we have to advance the claim of the one Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church, and we shall have made a real advance in our progress as controversialists when we have once recognized that the real battle must lie here, and that all other considerations are secondary. How much time and energy, for example, are daily wasted by an elaborate discussion of the validity of Anglican orders, and of the reasons for which our Holy Father condemned them. I have known more than one Anglican silenced and amazed on being informed that if the orders of his clergy were valid



ten times over, he himself would be no more a Catholic than before. Or again, an elaborate discussion on the respective moralities of Spain and England, a debate as to the doctrine of "intention," an explanation of the meanings of the words "matter" and "form"—all these things, useful though they may be toward the removal of misconceptions, yet do not really touch the point. Of course, it may often be necessary to diverge upon them as down by-lanes; but it is necessary for us ever to keep in mind that they are not the high-road, and to do our utmost to bring back our theological adversaries to the central line of the Catholic economy. Let us first discover the authority on which our opponent relies, and then after pointing out its weaknesses, propose to him our own grounds of faith, showing him, if necessary, that in Scripture, history, and practice, the Church that is built upon Peter has alone a promise of security.

5. Finally, let us remember that the gift of faith is not the result of, though it is frequently given in response to, intellectual processes. No man on earth can actually argue another into submission to the Catholic Church. All that the intellect can do is to climb a hill toward heaven; it cannot fly; it must await the rushing of the wings of faith; it can lay the sacrifice in order, build an altar, and fall to prayer; but a divine fire must come down from heaven before the victim is consumed and his smoke rises to God.

Therefore, the final appeal must consist in an urging to prayer. Men may approach the Catholic Church from a thousand paths; one may come by patristic study, another by the example of friends, another by the emotional impressions of music or ceremonial; but none of these things are adequate as a gate for entering the City of God. It must be entered finally by faith, and by faith alone.



The Church, indeed, stands upon the earth, but each of her twelve doors is supernatural and each is identical, each is one several and celestial pearl—that pearl of great price for which it is worth a man's while to sacrifice all that he possesses.

Therefore, our final plea must be for prayer and the purification of motives. We must tell those who approach us that they must disregard consequences, forget father and mother and worldly prospects; that all that the intellect, the will, and the emotions can do is to prepare a highway for God to travel upon—a soul which God may be pleased to visit—that they must pray and then pray again—and finally pray; for that faith is a moral gift, bestowed upon scholar and fool alike; offered not to him who, as à Kempis says, can discuss learnedly upon the Trinity, but to him who loves God; not to him who can define contrition, but to him who feels it.

To conclude then.

It is, of course, an impossible task to attempt to sum up the evidence for and against the future progress of the Catholic Church in England: but it may be worth while to mention a few facts that undoubtedly bear upon it.

Briefly, as all authorities confess, there is a religious movement going on in England among religious bodies outside the Church, which, like all movements, is having a double effect. That movement may be named disintegration.

It was hoped at what historians call the "Reformation" that the severing of the ties between England and Rome would result in the consolidation of the religious elements in England. The Catholic idea of all nations being brought into unity in the City of God, of walls being broken down, of Babel being ruined and Jerusalem built, of the fulfilment of the promise of Pentecost when all men heard alike, each



in a manner that he could understand, the one Gospel of Christ—this was almost explicitly rejected. In future, it was then said, each country must seek to emphasize national characteristics instead of obliterating them; St. Paul was wrong when he proclaimed that there should be neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian nor Scythian; on the contrary, each nation must resolutely follow out its own ideas, trim the Gospel according to its personal proclivities, and enshrine the most convenient aspect of that Gospel in a "National Church." There is little wonder then if the people of England followed this root-idea out to its logical conclusion and, after accepting the individual rights of nations as against those of an universal Church, proceeded to insist upon the individual rights of individuals as against those of the nation. If a nation, they said, needs exceptional treatment and is unable to bow to a worldwide authority, the individual in his turn needs exceptional treatment, and must ultimately find himself unable to bow to a national authority. There is surely no doubt that this was the manner in which the claim of private judgement pure and simple succeeded to the claim of national judgement with which Henry VIII, Thomas Cranmer, Thomas Cromwell, and the rest began their work.

Gradually, then, English religious sentiment and English national religion have crumbled: first the piece was detached from the rock; then the piece resolved itself into its component grains by a perfectly natural process.

In the last seventy years we have seen once more a reaction from this simple individualism. First, in the Tractarian Movement, there began that return toward the idea of Catholic authority which has reached such an astonishing point in our own days. Roughly speaking High Churchmen have at last come back to the same cross-road at which their spiritual forefathers left Catholic unity.



The *Church Times*, for instance, is never weary of insisting upon what it calls "the Catholic Church as a whole," as being the final authority, and upon the Church of England as its immediate interpreter. But there is also a large and growing section of High Church opinion that goes further than this. Many devout clergymen and laymen are whittling away the Church of England's authority to the increasing dignity of the Catholic Rule: they are asserting explicitly that they will never be content until affairs have reached the state that they were in at the beginning of Henry VIII's reign, and England is once more reunited to the Holy See.

Now this is the direct result of disintegration. What shrewd or holy men perceived at the outset—namely, that separation from the Holy See meant ultimately complete individualism—is being perceived at last by persons at the present day who look intelligently back upon the inevitable course of history; and they are beginning to reunite more and more, first within themselves, by societies and guilds, with the hope that in time all may one day be reunited with the centre of unity.

In the dissenting sects exactly the same process is before our eyes. Beginning by the rights of the individual three centuries ago, Nonconformists proceeded to gather themselves into organized bodies under various leaders, though protesting with all their might against any claim to sacerdotal or divine authority being made by those purely human societies. Now matters have gone much further; the sects that split one from the other began by reuniting in a kind of loose organization; and by such institutions as the "Free Church Council," and such phrases as "Puritan England," "Our Puritan Ancestors," "Free Churches," and the like, their members are gradually having painted before them the divine idea of an authoritative body in whose presence



the individual must forget his individualism—a picture which had its original in England before Henry VIII's apostasy, and which is still a reality in the case of all adherents of the Holy See.

This disintegration, then, has reached in one section of opinion a *reductio ad absurdum*; and the separate particles have begun to come together again in revolt from the absurdity.

Now this process may be interpreted in two ways. Either it may be said that it has a sinister bearing upon Catholic hopes, since men are receiving by it a delusive sense of comfort in an authority other than that of the Catholic Church, external and necessary to the preservation of the individual; or it may be said that the fact that men are beginning to feel the need for such an authority augurs well for their final return to the only centre whence such authority really flows.

But, in my personal opinion, these two interpretations are not mutually exclusive. They seem to me to be both true.

It is certainly a fact that many individuals, especially in the Church of England, are hindered from returning to Catholic unity because they think that they have already found it; on the other hand, though many such may live and die Anglicans, I do not believe for an instant that their grandchildren will be content to do so. If we may trust the indications of history and logic at all, there are abundant signs that those who set out three hundred years ago from Rome, and who have already returned so far on their journey, will ultimately finish their pilgrimage by once more entering her gates.

They have visited the city of Individualism, and have found it to be one of confusion; they have returned, halting at inn after inn, attempting to call it home and to treat it as their abiding place; they have even gone to bed



there, content to die in what they fancied to be their Father's House; but the next morning the survivors have rubbed their eyes and set out once more for a day's march nearer home. Is it too much, then, to prophesy that finally none will be left upon the road? There will always, of course, be left the city of Individualism at one end—where each man is a law to himself—where each begins by insisting upon liberty and ends by relinquishing it in deference to his brother's equal liberty to believe something else—where this liberty throws off cloak after cloak, disclosing at last the features of mob law, anarchy, and religious license—where every man loses his freedom by insisting on it over-much. But at the other end there will always stand the City of Peace, beckoning, by her towers and pinnacles and the glory that flows from her, the weary feet of pilgrims and the disconsolate eyes of those who desire to see the King in His beauty. But as for the inns between—the “Federation of the Free Churches”—the “Church of England”—the “Branch of the Catholic Church in England”—the “Provinces of Canterbury and York”—and all the other desperately built shelters on the road from earth to heaven, from Babel to Jerusalem, from the nation to the world, from the twentieth century to Pentecost—though they shelter for the present many honest, sincere, and holy souls, though they may continue to shelter them for a little while longer—yet it is incredible that they should stand, at least in their present condition, say, for another fifty years. New inns may be built—no doubt they will be; new theories formed—new desperate expedients and attempts to supplant the City of God; but the old are tottering, and the new will in their time also fall.

And in the meantime, let us who look over the eternal walls along the road, which some of us too once travelled—let us not mock nor preach over-much at the tired groups



that straggle along so gallantly, that halt so illogically, that turn back so unreasonably, that curse us so furiously, that misunderstand us so grievously, that pitch new tents so complacently, that protest, cry out, argue, explain, deny and question so insistently. Let us remember our double task ; call out and encourage them with all our might, not bidding them hasten more quickly than their tired limbs can carry them, nor allowing them, so far as we are concerned, to halt for one instant on their road to God, but toward them show charity, zeal, and sympathy. And above all, when we visit our Lord in His Palace, where He reigns supreme over all the world, or assist at the tremendous Sacrifice whose smoke ascends unceasingly before God within the city of which we are citizens; or when we go to the Queen Mother in her castle, and mix with her friends and servants, let us not forget to put in a word now and again to her and to them, and to Him who is her Son, on behalf of the souls for whom He died, and for whom He waits—those souls of whom Mary is Mother, though they do not know it, whose ministers are her servants, whose God, as well as ours, is Jesus Christ, whose chief terror, like ours, is sin and unfaithfulness, and whose hope is heaven.







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